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BELGIAN PROBLEMS SINCE THE WAR

BY
LOUIS PIERARD
MEMBER OF THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT

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FOREWORD

I ACCEPTED with great pleasure the opportunity offered by my friend, Louis Pierard, to write a foreword to his lectures on Belgium and to express concerning them the appreciation that I feel.

It was not an easy matter to interest audiences accustomed to the wide horizons of the New World in the affairs of a small country less populated and extensive than New York state or Massachusetts.

But Pierard, whose linguistic talents we also envy, had two distinct advantages in favor of his success: as artist, politician, or writer, he has come to know from all points of view this "land of experiments" that is Belgium; he also knows other lands so well that he can understand which of those experiments are of real interest to them.

To the Americans, whose extraordinary power of assimilation has succeeded in unifying peoples of a score of different nationalities, he described with great precision and objectiveness that which differentiates as well as that which identifies the two groups of population, Flemish and Walloon, living contiguously in Belgium north and south of a line passing through Waterloo.

I should perhaps be inclined to quibble with him as to the somewhat vague causes to which he attributes the psychological differences between the Flemish and the Walloon. I attribute a much more considerable influence than does he, not only to economic conditions today but also to economic factors that have been at work for ages on the mentality of the Belgian population groups.

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134

That, however, does not detract in the slightest from the accuracy and truthfulness of the highly artistic portrait that Pierard furnishes us of the Flemish or Walloon group of today.

Another of his lectures is given up to a discussion of workmen's leisure time. No one is better qualified to deal with this than Pierard.

Since the Belgian laboring class won the legal eight-hour day, it has devoted a large share of its social and political activity to seeking and advancing solutions of the problem which is expressed in the following neat way:—"What is the worker to do during the hours when he has nothing to do?"

In Belgium now, indeed, and especially in the province of Hainaut, which Pierard represents in Parliament, interesting steps have been taken with a view to the utilization of the Workmen's leisure time. He has perhaps not dwelt sufficiently on his own part in the common effort. I take pleasure in mentioning it for him.

As for the lectures on the Belgian Labor Party, they must have interested American audiences, the more so because of the vast difference between the political and social proceedings of Belgian workmen and those of their American brethren.

In America, on one hand, there is an important body of workmen to whom a non-political, syndicated organization assures a wage scale that is astonishing to the European proletariat; in Belgium, on the other hand, more than anywhere else, the workmen, in order to emerge from the miserable situation in which they found themselves fifty years ago, were obliged to combine the various forms of

their syndicated coöperative, mutual, and political activities into a single powerful unit.

I described this organization about three years ago in a bulky volume: *The Belgian Workers' Party (1885-1925)*.

In his lectures, Pierard has dealt broadly with the same subject, completing and clarifying its discussions.

Even after Reed's excellent work, to which Pierard gives due praise, these practical lessons in socialism will be read with great interest because of the light thrown upon what constitutes the originality of tendencies and methods peculiar to the Belgian Labor Party.

As Pierard says, Belgian workmen are little, I should like to say too little, concerned with theory. Of Marx we know scarcely anything but certain propagandist formulae, often distorted or diminished by ignorant disciples. Belgian workmen are prone to think, for example, that for the followers of Marx the social problem is but a question of the full dinner pail, while they, on the other hand, boast of being Socialists in a truer sense.

Nevertheless, in 1925, following our general election resulting in a brilliant Socialist victory, the man who of all French Socialists is perhaps the most steeped in Marxism, our friend Braeke—at present engaged in editing the collected works of Marx—wrote to me: "The Belgian Labor Party is, in truth, the most Marxian of all the Socialist parties in Europe." And, really, I think he was right.

There is not one, in fact, that is more clearly an injection of the labor movement into the sphere of politics, or that has built up such intimate relation-

ship and close bonds between economic and political action, or that has so completely absorbed this fundamental principle of Marx: "The emancipation of laborers must be the work of the laborers themselves."

As Pierard has said, Belgian Socialists are not afraid of being called reformers. They are indeed reformers. But they are such after the manner of Jaurès in his admirable chapter X, on "The Army, the Fatherland, the Proletariat," which one is a bit surprised to find, like a clearing in a forest, in the midst of the technical chapters of his *New Army*. "The working class," he says, "has nothing to gain for its claims by brutality. Not as a savage figure should proletarian civilization announce itself to the world. Acts of destruction result in other things besides deceiving mankind, as yet on its guard, concerning the meaning and value of socialist thought which is destined to be creative, orderly, and progressive. By giving to the proletariat the illusion of momentary violence, it is turned away from the search for real strength which consists in ever widening brotherhood and ever more concerted action."

That such is, indeed, the strength of the Belgian Labor movement, the lectures of Pierard will have the honor to prove.

EMILE VANDERVELDE

*Minister of State in Belgium,
formerly Foreign Minister.*

February 1929

PREFACE

LITTLE Belgium will never forget what the United States did during the War for the material relief and the moral comfort of her population. The names of President Wilson, Herbert Hoover, and Ambassador Brand Whitlock have been given to many streets and places of my native country. America knew and realizes still that the small country which had lived peacefully since 1830, after having been so many times the battlefield of Europe, was really victimized by war and had no part in its responsibilities.

The War has passed and in spite of the sympathy that America retains for Belgium, I fear that Americans are not aware of the conditions which prevail now in King Albert's Kingdom. Yet no country deserves more the attention of the new world—for little Belgium, which sent across the ocean those Huguenot Walloons who were the first to settle in Manhattan, is so different from America! It is old and new Europe at the same time. Two languages, French and Flemish, competing along an internal boundary which has not changed since centuries; two nationalities but one country; and a labor movement which has done marvelous things over the past forty years for the welfare and education of working classes: these are the main features of Belgian public life which we shall study.

I think really that at the Institute of Politics, in Williamstown, among the hills of New England I have seen something of American idealism. On the eve of the World War, the great Italian historian,

Ferrero, used to see in our hyper-industrial world a duel between the notions of quantity and quality. I am sure that a great civilization is growing here and that, sooner than Europeans expect, it will show itself a civilization of stupendous power, of "the biggest in the world," but also of the most refined, spiritual life, a civilization human and great.

L. P.

New York,
September, 1928.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. WALLOONS AND FLEMINGS	1
II. WORKERS' LEISURE	20
III. LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM	40
IV. LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM <i>(Continued)</i>	55
V. LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM <i>(Continued)</i>	71
VI. LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM <i>(Concluded)</i>	88
INDEX	101

BELGIAN PROBLEMS SINCE THE WAR

I

WALLOONS AND FLEMINGS

DURING the War of 1914-1918, the Germans tried by all means to provoke a revival of the domestic quarrel of languages in Belgium. Taking advantage of the attitude of some extremists who are now in Holland or Germany, banished from their native country, they hoped to drive a wedge between Flanders and Wallonia—but in vain. The bulk of the nation remained untouched and sturdy in its resistance to invaders. I dare to say that, notwithstanding some incidents, notwithstanding the bitterness of some post-war internal fights (for instance, that which arose around the State University of Ghent), Belgium behaved well after the baptism of blood and sorrow which lasted four years and proved her right to live as a nation. Belgium is not a mere artificial construction of diplomacy; it is a vivid and strong reality.

“What is a nation?” asked the great French writer Ernest Renan, after the War of 1870. His answer was that a nation is not made by unity of language, of blood, or of religion. Surely, he kept in his mind the lost provinces, Alsace and Lorraine. And he might have recalled that some French citizens speak Breton and Basque, which are more than dialects, and that many of the gallant seamen of Louis XIV commanded by Jean Bart spoke only Flemish, a dialect which is nearly as popular in the vicinity of French Dunkirk, Cassel, and Hazebrouck as in Belgium.

Renan says: “To have done great things together,

being ready to do others: these are essential conditions for being a people. To have suffered and hoped together, that is better than common customs and strategic frontiers; that is realized by everyone in spite of diversity in race or speech!"

Such conditions are fulfilled in Belgium. The martyrdom of Flemish Louvain and Aerschot was duplicated in 1914 by the tragedies of Walloon Dinant and Andenne. Walloons and Flemings suffered together in deportation camps and fought together on the banks of the Yser.

But war was not necessary. No war is ever of any use. Between Flanders, which is a land of agriculture and harbors, a land of peasants and textile workers, and Wallonia, with its coal mines, its quarries, its great forests, its glass- and iron-workers, there are economic links of the most valuable kind. Antwerp, one of the greatest harbors in the world, is the door of Liège and Charleroi, of the Sambre and Meuse valleys as of the Flemish Plain. Those provinces are, as post-impressionist painters would say of colors, *complementary* to each other. I will say more: Walloons and Flemings have some political virtues in common. Both populations have an equal love for self-government, for municipal and provincial independence. Their local patriotism has resisted all enervating centralization. They have been equally turbulent through centuries against foreign tyranny and ambitious princes. They are proud of the same spirit of association. When three Belgians meet anywhere in the wide world, they make an association, with a chairman, a secretary, and a treasurer. And that is true for Walloons as for Flemings.

We shall see great differences of temper between

those populations, but they have something yet in common: what I would like to call a curious ardor to live, the same frenzy for work and pleasure. To work hard—and fast—and afterward to seek the climax in pleasure: dance, song, noise, color, pageants, drinking, plenty of food, with good cooking—that is the ideal of the genuine Belgian, be he Walloon or Fleming. It is a sort of mixture of Jordaens and Constantin Meunier.

An Italian traveler, Guicciardini, who has written a curious book on early Flemish painters, passing through Belgium in the sixteenth century, was impressed by that frenzy in the lively, turbulent, good-hearted people living on a very small spot of the planet, which was already in that time one of the most crowded in the world.

In one of the last bulletins of the Belgian Royal Academy, Mr. Cuvelier has published for the first time a curious account of a journey made through Belgium in 1641 by a certain Cardinal Count Carlo Rossetti, who had been sent at the age of twenty-four as Nuncio by the Pope Urban VIII to the court of Henrietta, Queen of England. The Cardinal and his friend Domenico Paulozzi Parma, going back from England to Italy, were impressed by the gaiety of Belgian people, notwithstanding a long economic crisis and endemic war which was the lot of a country later called the battlefield of Europe.

During the last war, English and Dutch people did not understand at all the attitude and temper of Belgian refugees who had lost everything but remained full of confidence and nearly gay, like that boatman of the Scheldt described by Verhaeren, fight-

ing against the storm, holding in his lips a green leaf, an emblem of indomitable hope.

I have spent much time up to now in describing common traits of Walloons and Flemings. But I have chiefly to explain the differences between them. Belgium is a country made up of two populations—or, if you prefer, two *nationalities*. M. Henri Pirenne, the author of a *History of Belgium* which is now world-famous, wrote in 1905:

Walloon national feeling and Flemish national feeling both exist surely, under the community of civilization which we have witnessed in various spheres of social and political life. . . . Under that common civilization, there are surely in our country two other civilizations, very distinct: a Walloon national feeling and a Flemish national feeling.

Yet, we ought not to forget the German-speaking part of the Belgian population. Even before the war, there were some villages near Verviers and Arlon, on the border of Germany and Luxemburg, where German was the popular speech. Now, that German-speaking population has increased since the annexation (or retrocession) to Belgium, through the treaty of Versailles, of three Districts or *Kreise*: Malmédy, Eupen, Saint-Vith, and neutral Moresnet, which belonged formerly to the Reich.

Altogether, it makes 90,000 German-speaking Belgians among eight million inhabitants.

The frontier between French and Flemish runs from Mouscron, south of Ypres, to Visé, north of Liège. It has not changed since the fifth century. It corresponds probably to an ancient Roman way or to a line of military defense. North of that line, Flemish is the popular speech, and south of it, Walloon. *Flemish is a dialect*, or rather a complex of dialects

derived from Dutch which is considered by the population as its literary language. There are great differences in pronunciation or vocabulary between the Flemish, say of West Flanders and that of Limburg.

Walloon, which is spoken south of the linguistic boundary, is a complex of Romanic dialects, cousin and sometimes prior to French, which is the written language of the population. Roughly, the four northern provinces of Belgium: West Flanders, East Flanders, Antwerp, and Limburg are *Flemish*, while the four southern provinces, Hainaut, Namur, Liège, and Luxemburg are *Walloon*, the ninth one, Brabant, falling half on the one side and half on the other, with Greater Brussels, the capital, as a sort of neutral territory. Brussels, indeed, where French and Flemish are equally spoken (and often equally badly) by the majority of citizens, is the melting pot where all the elements coming from the various parts of Belgium quarrel, mix, and marry in the most curious way.

Roughly, we have in Belgium four millions of Flemings and three millions of Walloons, in a total population which numbers nearly eight millions. In his excellent book on *Politics of Belgium*, Mr. Thomas Harrison Reed, Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, writes about the frontier of languages in Belgium:

Though this boundary line preserves very rigorously its generally east and west direction, it is locally irregular enough, usually meandering about the villages but at times running down the centre of a street. It has suffered no material change for centuries. French villages have confronted Flemish villages, the Flemish side of the street the French side, time out of mind, without one tongue gaining on the other and without any tendency toward the formation of a common speech.

There are small minorities of Flemish workmen in Wallonia, near Charleroi, Liège, or La Louvière. But the Flemings, curiously enough, speak generally, if not French, the Walloon dialect of the natives among whom they have settled.

Similarly there are thousands of Flemish miners who come every day with trains at cheap fare from their Flemish home to the mining districts of the Hainaut or Liège.

The problem of languages in Belgium is complicated by the fact that in Flanders, besides an enormous majority of peasants and workingmen who speak only Flemish, well-to-do and cultivated people speak French at the same time, and sometimes are absolutely ignorant of the popular speech. Pointing to the Belgian Constitution which provides "free use of languages" that minority claims the right of being taught and governed in French. The French language has been deeply rooted among those *happy few* of Flanders since the time of the dukes of Burgundy in the fifteenth century. It is worth noting that the greatest Belgians who have written in French during the last forty years are Flemish-born: Charles de Coster, the author of *Thyl Uylenspiegel*, the epos of Flanders rebelling against the tyranny of Spain, Emile Verhaeren, Maurice Maeterlinck, Charles Van Lerberghe, Max Elskamp, Eugene Demolder, George Eekhoud, Gregoire le Roy.

Besides, those among the Flemings who write in the popular language—for instance, Guido Gezelle, a Catholic priest of Courtrai, and Styn Streuvels, formerly a baker, who is a sort of western Gorki—have added to the empire of Dutch literature a very curious province indeed. There is something genuine,

not only in the freshness of their inspiration, but in the colored idiom they use, so different from the hyper-refined language of Holland's old civilization.

There is thus, or there was up to these last years, a ditch between cultivated and rich people in Flanders and the peasants and workingmen supported by the Lower Clergy, while the bishops would be rather with the higher classes. That is the social side of the quarrel of languages in Belgium. Moreover, as you saw, it is chiefly a quarrel between the French and Flemish in Flanders, far more than a conflict between Flanders and Wallonia.

Curious to say, extremists in Flanders and Wallonia join hands in their resistance to a natural tendency of the central government to enforce the teaching of both languages and make the knowledge of them compulsory for all officials, clerks, police, officers, custom agents, etc. Parliament has been discussing, after a passionate debate in the press and the country, a new bill on the use of languages in the army. Soldiers will be recruited according to a provincial system. They will serve in their native province. Companies will be purely Flemish or purely Walloon, which will make training much easier.

French is the first language in the elementary and secondary schools of Wallonia. All things are taught in French. The learning of Flemish as a second language is compulsory, while German and English in some sections are optional. In Flanders, the teaching is given in Flemish, French as a second language being compulsory, too. Now, Walloons say that Flemish is of no use to them, that they prefer English or German for their children. They say: it is not a question of sympathy but of world-circulation. Belgians

must have equal rights, but such an equivalence does not exist between languages. French is spoken by millions and millions of people in the world, while Flemish, which is broken Dutch, is understood by scarcely eleven millions of people (living in Holland, Belgium, South Africa, Dutch India). "All Belgians are equal before the law," says the Belgian Constitution, but a skyscraper in New York is higher than a peasant's dwelling in a tiny Belgian hamlet. In any case, say the Walloons and the pro-French Flemings, let the Belgians have a free choice, everywhere in their country, between French and Flemish.

But the "Flamingants," or pro-Flemish partisans, do not agree with that principle. They say: "It is not in the interest of democracy that the working people should be separated from the 'intelligentsia' by the Babelian confusion of idioms." They claim the right for every Fleming to be ruled, tried, taught, commanded in his Flemish language. As for schools, they deny to the father the exclusive right of indicating what language his child uses most, in places like Greater Brussels where both French and Flemish are used by the population. Many Flemish fathers choose French schools for their children in Brussels because they think it is profitable from a commercial and social point of view. The number of bilinguals was seriously growing in Brabant from 1880 to 1890. But the propaganda of the pro-Flemish "Flamingants," whose faith has a kind of mystical character, stimulates the loyalty of the Flemings to their ancestral tongue. The movement is chiefly a sentimental one. It reveals sometimes a fanaticism equal to that of the new nationalism which other people promoted in

Europe during these last twenty years before securing national independence or at least autonomy.

The Belgian Revolution of 1830 had been a reaction against a natural tendency of Holland to preponderance in that kingdom of the Netherlands which had been created after Waterloo by the Congress of Vienna. Of course, the first period of Belgian independence was rather pro-French. The ideal of some of the great statesmen who built the new Belgian state, which received at its birth military aid from France, was to achieve unity and centralization through the French language. The Jacobins of the French Revolution had in a similar way tried to make of France a united nation by declaring war on all idioms considered by them merely as "patois." (The Abbé Gregoire proved that more than six million Frenchmen did not know the French language on the eve of the great Revolution.)

No doubt something of that spirit prevailed among prominent officials sent by Paris into Alsace and Lorraine after the armistice.

We admit frankly that for nearly half a century after the Belgian Revolution of 1830, the Flemish-speaking population of the new Kingdom suffered very grievous wrongs. Mr. Reed, in his book, summarizes in the following way the Flemish position during that period:

French as the official language was the language of justice and administration. Flemings accused of crime were often tried and convicted before judges who understood not a word of their defense. As early as 1840, 100,000 Flemings signed a petition demanding the right to be administered, judged, and taught in their own language. Few Flemings, however, were voters in those days and the French governing class

was slow to undertake reform. It was not until 1873 that the first law on the use of Flemish in criminal proceedings was enacted and only since the introduction of manhood suffrage have the old injustices disappeared. With their disappearance, however, the old bitterness did not die out. It is safe to say that the ordinary Flemish citizen suffers today no substantial injustice because of his language.

I think that Mr. Reed is right. The so-called "Flamingantisme" (*i.e.*, Flemish movement), which had been a natural counter-reaction against Frenchification and which had been started by great Flemish writers, is now in a purely mystic phase. Since 1919, universal and equal suffrage has existed in Belgium. Flemings have the majority of seats in Parliament. They have got thus the possibility of putting an end to wrongs if wrongs, other than imaginary, exist.

But what to do next? A bill on the use of languages in secondary schools was passed even before the War under the pressure of the Flemish majority of Chamber and Senate. Another one on the use of languages in administration was voted some years ago.

Two Belgian universities belong to the state. Teaching was in French in both of them. The Flemish part claimed one of them, asked to make of the University of Ghent, whose courses were attended not only by Belgians (Walloons or Flemings) but by a great number of foreigners at the same time, a purely Flemish school where teaching would be given in Flemish instead of French. An offer was made to create a new university in Antwerp where that Flemish ideal would be fulfilled. It was rejected. The Flemish party demanded "Ghent or nothing."

At last, after a desperate fight in the country and in Parliament, a solution was proposed by Mr. Nolf, the

head of the Department of Education in Belgium. It became a law in 1924. Courses are duplicated at the University of Ghent, in such a way that Flemish-speaking students must take a third of their course in French and *vice versa*. This is a solution in the bilingual mood, and we have said already that bilingualism is generally the principle and tendency of the central government and that it gives satisfaction neither to the Flemish extremists nor to the Walloons and the French-speaking *bourgeois* of Flanders.

One of the last points of the Flemish program, *i.e.*, equality of the two languages in the army, will be a reality through the new military bill.

The extreme "Flamingants" are for the dismemberment of the country. Some of them have conceived the childish dream of annexation of Flanders to Holland, the Walloon provinces going probably in that case to France. But the majority are simply for autonomy of Flanders as a whole, and join curiously with the extreme Walloons to advocate a reorganization of Belgium on a federalist basis, after the Swiss system. Schemes have been drafted by members of Parliament. They are in favor of three divisions, Flanders, Wallonia, and a special zone for the Greater Brussels, foreign affairs, finance, and some other services remaining in common. May I say that a further extension of the actual autonomy of our nine provinces would perhaps suffice to evade periodical quarrels (which are pure nonsense), and that without endangering the strength and cohesion of Belgium itself?

Let me say a word now about the differences of temper and mind between Walloons and Flemings,

between Flanders and Wallonia. Those differences are not a sign of weakness for a country. Belgium is a small but rich mosaic of districts and populations.

I would see a first difference after the nature of the landscape. Flanders is a plain, Wallonia a land of hills. M. Emile Cammaerts has pointed to that contrast in his fine book, *The Treasure House of Belgium*.

The first feature which strikes the traveller when crossing Belgium from north to south is the contrast between the aspect of the Flemish plain and that of the high wooded hills of the Ardennes. From Ostend to Brussels, the wide expanding landscape of Flanders and north Brabant is scarcely broken by a few screens of poplars along the straight roads and canals. South of Namur, as soon as the line of the Sambre and Meuse is crossed, the railway line rises to a high *plateau* from which a complex maze of deep, winding valleys, running through the Ardennes, appears from time to time. In the north, well-tended fields are to be seen, and the plain is studded with villages and farms. In the south, the fields are confined to the *plateau*, the valleys are thickly wooded or covered with broom or heather and the land seems much poorer and very sparsely populated. The aspect of the cottages further emphasizes the differences. There are no quarries in Flanders and bricks are in general use. The walls are whitewashed, the doors and shutters painted green and this scheme of color is completed by the red-tiled roof. On the other hand, local stone of a grey or brown color is used in the region of the Meuse and the Ardennes, and, slate being plentiful, the blue-grey note is repeated on the roofs so that the houses instead of shining brilliantly as in Flanders, appear like dark patches against the green background. It would be difficult to find anywhere in Europe two landscapes more entirely different lying so close together.

I think the question of race might be overlooked.

Both peoples are a mixture of Teutonic and Latin elements.

As for the opposition, which a classical Marxist would have liked to show some years ago, between agricultural Flanders and the industrial districts of the south, it has been disturbed by the discovery of mines in Limburg and the growth of an industrial district in the Campine where radium is now extracted and glass made by American machines at the very place where, some years ago, wild birds were flying above the desolate heath. Moreover, how could we forget that Ghent is a big textile center where English wool and Russian flax have been worked for centuries, and that factories are spreading in extraordinary numbers around Brussels, Antwerp, and Courtrai.

No, it is rather a fundamental difference of temper between the two parts of Belgium.

For instance: from the religious point of view, it is interesting to remember that nearly all the Protestants of Belgium are in the Walloon provinces and chiefly in the mining districts of Hainaut and Liège. The miners of the Borinage, a big coal district southwest of Mons, were evangelized in the 'seventies by Vincent Van Gogh, that genially gifted Dutchman who was a preacher before becoming one of the greatest post-impressionist painters. Some of the two hundred twenty-seven Huguenot Walloons, men, women, and children, who composed the party of Jessé deForest, citizen of Avesnes, were born in that Mons region in the old country of Hainaut, "*Terre tenue de Dieu et du soleil*," as the old maps say. The wife of Jessé deForest was born in Mons. As you know, the party sailed in 1623 for this wild coast. On the

way the leader died, but the following year, 1624, the colony settled in New Netherland. I am proud to recall the fact that my countrymen of Mons count among their ancestors some of the great pilgrims who helped build up America.

Thus, nearly all the Protestants of Belgium are in the south. Yet, the majority of Walloons are Catholic like the Flemings. But compare both populations, even from that point of view. Compare their religious ceremonies, the tragic procession of Furnes—very like to that of the Spanish penitents in Seville—with the gay pageants of Gerpennes or Walcourt, between the Sambre and Meuse, where relics of saints are guarded by jolly good fellows wearing uniforms of Napoleonic grenadiers and dancing merrily.

Compare Flemish carols with the carols of Malmédy, that charming Walloon country which has been given back to Belgium by the treaty of Versailles. In some of those Walloon carols, we find the shepherds awakening in the frozen night, discussing about the gifts they will bring to the Virgin: sugar from the Canaries, beer, lace for the Child. The Angel speaks to them in French but they ask him to use the Walloon dialect if he wishes to be understood. In those carols of Malmédy as in the Christmas play of the famous Liège puppets, there is a sort of familiar and tender realism similar to that of an early Walloon painter, known as the Master of Flémalle, who lived in the fifteenth century.

If you study Belgian folklore, you can see that satirical songs are more frequent in the Walloon provinces while Flanders reveals a curious mixture of sensualism and mysticism well displayed in the work of her painters.

Yet another difference: Flemings, living in the plain, are specially interested by light and color: they are painters. Walloons, living among their hills, in narrow valleys, concentrate their attention on well-delineated landscapes. Their interest is not in color and light but in line and shape. They are musicians or sculptors.

Sometimes they are dreamers, too. Hippolyte Taine writes about the Ardennes with their mountains and deep forests: "*Là, vivent des gens pleins d'étranges rêves.*"

Remember Paul Verlaine, who was a Walloon through his grandmother and, when young, spent all his holidays in Belgium, at Paliseul.

Au pays de mon père, il est des bois sans nombre.

Compare now the music full of gorgeous color, composed by Flemings like Peter Benoit and Jan Blockx, to the simple and bare sonatas or melodies of those two great Walloons: César Franck and Guillaume Lekeu. See, after the works of the Flemish sculptor, Jef Lambeaux, who is a sort of Jordaens in bronze, the tragic miners of Constantin Meunier or the gracious nymphs of Victor Rousseau.

There has been some ink spilled in Belgium concerning the name of that marvelous "Exhibition of Flemish and Belgian art" which was made possible last year at the Royal Academy of London, thanks to the generosity of British and American lovers of art. Was there a Walloon art, apart from the Flemish, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

Some exhibitions organized in Belgium before the War reminded us that some great painters and sculptors like Beauneveu, Gossart, Roger de la Pasture

(so called Van der Weyden) who are considered generally as Flemings, were born in the old Walloon county of Hainaut, divided now between France and Belgium.

Perhaps, in such a time, there was neither Flemish nor Walloon nor Belgian nor Dutch art but *one* school of the Netherlands, of the Low Countries, in which all peculiar signs of local influences disappeared. There is a remarkable unity of style between all those early masters and it needs a great deal of attention, a very patient study, to seize a difference between the Bruges placidity or sweetness in Van Eyck, Memling, and G. David and the dramatic sense of the Walloon, Roger Van der Weyden, whose Virgins leaning on the sacred body are broken in two like the old mother of the miner in the famous group of the "grisou" (the mine-gas) by Constantin Meunier.

Common to Walloons and Flemings, artists and writers, is their love for their native country, for the humble village or province where they are born and which is always their best source of inspiration. Like the giant Anteus, Belgian poets and painters have shown their greatest vitality when they have kept in close touch with their native place.

Hear Emile Verhaeren:

*Mon pays tout entier vit et pense en mon corps,
Il absorbe ma force en sa force profonde
Pour que je sente mieux à travers lui le monde
Et célèbre la terre avec un chant plus fort.*

Verhaeren, who was a great admirer of your Walt Whitman, became the poet of modern life, the poet of machines. He has sung the gods and heroes of History, Mythology, Religion, and Art, in his *Multiple*

Splendeur and his *Rythmes Souverains* which compose together a sort of new *Légende des Siècles*. But always, that poet came back to his first inspiration, to that country of the Lower Scheldt, which appears in his first books, impregnated by his melancholy, and which looks, on the contrary, gay and bright in another book, *Toute la Flandre*.

Belgian art is very seldom permeated by foreign influence.

Look at Peter Breughel, the old Flemish master, who has such authentic sons among painters of the present-day Belgian advance guard. He went to Italy. He saw another light and other skies, but at the Straits of Messina, where he has imagined the fall of Icarus, he dreamed of his Flemish peasants. He could have cried like Verhaeren four centuries later:

C'est la Flandre pourtant qui retient tout mon coeur!

Jerome Bosch has, like Breughel, resisted foreign influence. Rubens was proud to possess some works by those two great and genuine masters of Flanders. That Rubens, who was sent to London by the King of Spain as an ambassador, would have chosen the models for some of his great religious or mythological paintings among the dockers working on the quays of Antwerp. Take *La Pêche Miraculeuse*, his famous work at Notre Dame in Mechlin. The apostles around the Christ are very like men you can see still on the quays of the Scheldt.

If we study the works of French-writing Flemings like Verhaeren, Maeterlinck, Van Lerberghe, or younger ones like Franz Hellens, we observe in them a mixture of sensualism and mysticism. They always depart from reality, but they are stirred by an un-

bounded imagination, and in their sacred "delirium" reality is transformed curiously, depicted in bright or grim colors. Verhaeren is in London, neurasthenic. He sees "the corpse of his mind floating on the Thames." He describes an old windmill in the Flemish landscape, and that windmill and that landscape are imbued with the dull feelings which are in the poet's soul.

Curiously enough, it happens very often that a strange fear of Death is hidden behind the apparent robust health of the Flemings. Remember old painters like Jerome Bosch, the first dramas of Maurice Maeterlinck and Van Lerberghe. But we like especially in modern literature the pure and simple mysticism of Guido Gezelle, writing in Flemish, or Max Elskamp, writing in French. Elskamp describes his own soul as a young lady walking in a quaint old park, going a-fishing, or dreaming under a tree. Some of his poems are like copies of popular ballads or of paintings by early masters.

We have seen that Walloons, living in small valleys, are no colorists but lovers of fine shapes and lines—draftsmen, sculptors, musicians. And when writing, they are chiefly analysts, fond of refined psychology and humor. They are novelists or, rather, tellers of short stories. Besides their French writers, they have a very rich and picturesque dialectal literature in Mons, Courtrai, Liège, Namur, and Nivelles. Liège has two theaters where works written in Walloon are played every night.

We have noted some differences between Walloons and Flemings but we have seen, at the same time, that they have many things in common. Generally

speaking, their writers and artists do not like abstractions. They are realists with a pronounced taste for concrete facts, for the direct touch of life. But Flemings remain nearest to sensation, fond of color and noise; while Walloons are more intellectual, fond of analysis and beautiful lines.

In spite of their differences, they are born to understand each other. They are condemned by history, by geography, to live together. On January 27, 1861, Charles de Coster wrote in a magazine whose editor was Felicien Rops, the great Walloon engraver: "The Walloon by heart understands the Fleming, his equal; they can shake hands."

Their common country situated at the crossway of civilization,

Entre la France ardente et la grave Allemagne,

as Verhaeren said, has been during centuries the cockpit of Europe. Belgium has now a great mission to fulfil, notwithstanding the tragic memory of recent horrors and sufferings. Belgium ought to be the natural link between the Latin, German, and English civilizations. We are better placed than any other people in the world to promote mutual understanding and coöperation between nations, international brotherhood, spiritual demobilization, purification of minds.

Belgium is a corridor of commerce and transit for goods. It ought to be that also for ideas.

II

WORKERS' LEISURE

THE way in which workingmen spend their *free hours*, which have been increased in many countries since the armistice, is probably one of the most important of all social problems of today. After the War, the working class obtained through agreements between employers and trade-unions, or through the law, the eight-hour day. This was due partly to the increased strength of labor organizations and to the spirit of that International Charter of Labor which is included in the peace treaties just as is the Covenant. For the first time in history, a diplomatic treaty speaks of such things as "social justice."

It was recognized that workingmen had a right to a higher life, a right to sufficient leisure time. Everybody realized at last with Fouillée, the great French philosopher of the "*idées-forces*," that leisure is a social necessity. Forty governments were represented at the International Labor Conference of Washington. They pledged themselves to take steps in their respective countries to fix the workday at eight hours and the week at a maximum of forty-eight hours.

Organized labor has thus got, perhaps earlier than it dreamed on the eve of the World War, one of the great social reforms it claimed. The famous motto of the demonstrations organized on the first of May in Europe from 1891: THE THREE EIGHTS—eight hours' work, eight hours' rest, eight hours' leisure—became a substantial reality.

Now, we dare to say that sufficient attention had

not been paid by labor leaders and statesmen to the third part of the program, eight hours' leisure. What were the workingmen going to do with their increased free time, "the other eight hours" as the old Italian leader Turati calls them?

Physicians and economists had given plenty of arguments to explain why the human engine could not work over eight hours and that eight hours' rest were necessary to restore its power. Hector Denis, a Belgian scientist, who was among the first to advocate the eight-hour day in his country, said once: "The reduction of hours will not only restrain the power of capital over labor and spare the physical forces of the working man: it will chiefly promote his mental ascent and enable him to share in the intellectual treasure accumulated by humanity."

Now, what about such a prophecy? We shall see what inquiries about the actual state of things have proved.

Another argument in favor of the eight-hour day and a good use of leisure time, is that through modern rationalization, in many trades, the workingman has a purely mechanical or automatic part to play. He is as a small piece in an enormous machine. His leisure time, if well employed, will correct that "automatization" and give him an opportunity of enjoying a real life.

All social reformers, from utopists like Robert Owen and Charles Fourier to up-to-date labor leaders, have devoted their attention to that problem of free time. Do you remember *News from Nowhere* by William Morris? That great poet, who was an arch-enemy of industrialism and modern life, imagines a society where men shall work merrily in the country

and spend a large part of their leisure time in the heart of nature in beautiful and healthy dwellings, and wearing clothes and using all sorts of things made by hand. His friend and fellow artist, Walter Crane, has symbolized, in a fine drawing made for the first of May, the Social Revolution as a return of humanity to nature and to the land. There is always some truth in the dreams of poets and artists. It is the duty of governments to have a policy of transport and housing through which workingmen will be able to settle far away from the mephitic atmosphere of industrial suburbs where they are earning their daily bread. That is a part of the problem of leisure time. There is also the question of workmen's gardens. A Catholic priest of France, the Abbé Lemire, who was the republican deputy and Mayor of Hazebrouck, and who died one year ago, devoted strenuous efforts to give gardens to workingmen and clerks, in the vicinity of towns and industrial districts. Much has been done also in that way in Belgium and Germany.

The problem of leisure time ought to be studied and solved in a realistic and practical way. Goethe once wrote: "Nothing is more difficult for man than to spend his leisure time."

When the French Parliament discussed the eight-hour-day bill, members of the extreme left, as well as conservatives, dealt with the question. M. Ribot said:

We are not going to remain passive at the time of a fresh reduction of hours and think that our task is at an end. We must offer to workingmen more opportunities of spending their leisure-time in another way than pure idleness, to the detriment of their health and their whole life.

And so spoke M. Marcel Sembat, a socialist leader, and M. Léon Jouhaux, the general secretary of the French Federation of Labor.

Opponents say that you cannot prevent the workingman, after his eight hours at the factory or in the mine, from working elsewhere, at home, for instance, to increase his earnings. That is true. It is a fact that the Sixth International Labor Conference of Geneva, in June, 1924, when drafting a recommendation on the matter, agreed that there was nothing to do, to stop that. But we do not care if, for instance, the Belgian or French miner, when back from his work, is digging, sowing, or harvesting in his small garden which gives to his wife potatoes and other vegetables for their meals.

The only question is to know if we will leave to the workingman no other choice than between the public-house and betting. M. Paul Rives, a distinguished French expert, made an interesting inquiry some years ago among the workingmen of the Paris suburbs and in some industrial French centers, about the consequences of the Eight-Hour Act. His conclusions are not very encouraging. Generally speaking, pure idleness characterizes the leisure time of the French worker. Hear what M. Rives says in the book which he has written under that funny title: *La Corvée de Joie*: which I would translate as "The Labor of Recreation."

They are accustomed to disorder and that is stronger than any desire of improvement. Things are running in this way: after work, there is rest, sleep, and feast. But what to do with some idle hours? Well, they will be devoted to sleep or feast if you do not give the idea of using them in another way.

A workingman of thirty, earning a good wage, said in his picturesque language to the inquirer:

What am I doing when I am not in the factory or in the public-house? Well, I sleep. And when I am not sleeping? . . . Well. . . . Say, wifey, what do I do when I have nothing to do? I do not know. . . .

Well, I guess that the American worker, when he has nothing to do, drives miles without any special aim, in his Ford car.

To let the workingman know what he has to do when he has nothing to do: that is really the social problem of leisure time.

How are the workingmen going to utilize their increased free hours? If that conquest does not increase at the same time their knowledge, their general culture, and their morality; if it does not improve their health, then the spirit of the Charter of Labor will be violated and the eight-hour day will mean a regression instead of a social advance. Some people will say that it is not pertinent to deal officially, through legislation or otherwise, with that very delicate matter. "Free time ought to remain free," they would say. Is it worth answering that in any case, the workingman has to keep his liberty, his right of doing what he prefers, during his leisure time? I hope that nobody will ever have the idea of giving a compulsory character to an eventual organization and say, for instance, to the worker: "At 6 you will go to the playing ground; at 7 to the swimming pool; at 9 you will hear a lecture on Marxism; at 10 you will go to the movies to see a film on model prisons in Soviet Russia."

The aim is really to give to the working classes

more opportunities to use free time in a way which will be profitable to their health, their souls, their general culture. That is the sense of the recommendation voted at the Sixth International Labor Conference, whose reporter said on that occasion: "The moral value of a people depends, for a good deal, on the way in which it spends its leisure time."

In Belgium, immediately after the armistice, the provinces of Hainaut, Liège, and Brabant took interesting steps in the field of that recommendation. In 1922, I introduced in the Belgian Parliament a bill on the question of leisure time. It was the first one ever drafted on such a matter. It is not yet law. Reintroduced in 1925 after the dissolution of the Belgian Parliament and a general election, it was discussed during the past year at the Chamber of Deputies. It has yet to be ratified by the Senate and sanctioned by the King.

My intention was, when drafting that bill, to extend to all of Belgium what had been tried in the Province of Hainaut and, on a smaller scale, in Liège and Brabant. Before explaining exactly what the bill contains, it is worth saying that I have avoided two important problems which are in a certain way connected with the question of free time but which, in my opinion, ought to be the matter of another special legislation. First of all, there is the question of compulsory education after the elementary school. Education has been compulsory in Belgium, since 1914, for all children up to fourteen years of age. What becomes of young people during the critical period from fourteen to eighteen or twenty? All of them have not an opportunity of going to the secondary school and later to a university. They are handed to

the mine, to the factory, shops, or agriculture. Some international conferences have expressed the wish that some sort of education be made compulsory for young people between fourteen and eighteen. That is the spirit of a bill introduced in the French Parliament by M. Daladier, and of the Fisher Act in Great Britain. The Fisher Act stipulates that every boy or girl between fourteen and eighteen must give from time to time proof that he devotes himself to some sort of education—it may be attendance at a drawing school or trade school, or simply at lectures and free courses in a settlement. But I am told that it has been difficult to enforce that law, in spite of the fact that it seems to be moderate and reasonable.

Another problem of the first order for Belgium is the problem of technical education. Much has been done up till now on that ground through the action of some provinces and cities and specially in Hainaut, or through the trade-unions. I would mention, for instance, the schools of the diamond-workers in Antwerp, of the lithographers and coach-makers in Brussels.

But there is no law on the matter in Belgium. Some people say that technical education ought to be made compulsory and that it might be organized on the half-time system: the apprentice would spend four hours at the workshop and four hours at school, the employer paying the wage for eight hours and education being free of cost. As already said, that question is of the highest importance for Belgium. The lot of that crowded country depends on exportation. Notwithstanding the ability of our farmers, we produce only 29 per cent of the foodstuffs necessary to our dense population. We have to export the greatest

part of our industrial products in order to get the dollars, the pounds, or the Dutch *guilder* which are necessary to buy wheat, meat, rice, coffee, abroad.

Now, before the War, Belgium was rather a country of long hours and low wages. We exported chiefly, at the cheapest prices, textiles, rails, glass, cement, and coal. We export now, besides, products in which a great deal of "*main d'oeuvre*," of skill, and technical ability are incorporated; for instance, electrical or refrigerating machines. It means that we have to develop our technical schools. Much has been done in Charleroi, where the Province of Hainaut has created that marvelous *Université du Travail* (Labor University) which is considered as a model. The city of Liège has its school for mechanics. The Belgian State has organized recently in Brussels a High Institute of Arts and Crafts which will try to promote a revival of those trades where Belgium has produced, during many centuries, magnificent things: tapestry, furniture, crystal, ceramics. The next step ought to be an act making technical education compulsory for young workingmen on the base I have already indicated. But, even, in that case, the problem of leisure time of workingmen would remain untouched.

The first title of the bill I introduced was, "Bill for the Creation of a National Fund for the Workingman's Free Time." It is called now: "The National Fund for Popular Education." I took account of what existed already in the country, which was due to private enterprise, to associations flourishing in Belgium, to the cleverness of some employers and of the provinces or municipal councils. I tried to establish some coördination between all those inter-

esting efforts and to supplement them by some official institutions in the districts where private enterprise has failed. A national fund would be created which would receive grants and subventions from the state, the provinces, and cities, from wealthy people, employers, trade-unions, and coöperative societies. To that fund, the "*personnalité civile*" would be granted. That means that it would be independent of the state and might receive and spend money with complete legal authority.

There would be in Brussels a special "Board of Education" dealing with all work and organizations "for the free time of the workingman." A general council of thirty members appointed by the state, the provinces, and all great national associations of employers and workingmen would control the board. Once a year, a national conference would take place in Brussels or elsewhere in the country to discuss the problems of popular education.

One of the articles of the Bill reads:

The National Board, bearing always in mind the local needs and traditions, will organize art and folklore exhibitions, competitions for the making of cheap furniture and decoration of the workingman's home. It will promote gardening, physical training, through the creation of gymnasiums, playgrounds and bathing places, music (choral societies and bands), theatres with the contribution of professional actors and amateurs, general education through lectures, courses, cinema, visits of museums and art galleries and travels. The National Fund will give subventions to social centres, clubs, camps, and settlements opened to workmen of all opinions.

It is worth saying that we have already in Belgium a Public Libraries Act, operating very well, and that

in some villages or towns, the library will afford a good opportunity for the creation of a settlement. It will act as the central "nucleus" of a new organization.

What has been done, up till now, in various countries to promote education and a sound utilization of leisure time? I know that some of the big employers in this country have realized long ago the importance of play and recreation in the workingman's life. Belgian investigators came here at the end of the War, and their conclusions were published in two volumes on *Industrial Labor in the United States*, which were issued in Brussels in 1919. One of them, Dr. René Sand, says:

"American business men stick to the principle that to make populations prosperous is to make their enterprises prosperous at the same time." And Dr. Sand concludes: "that is a recognition of the importance of moral considerations even from the point of view of material prosperity." He says that good results have been registered even from an economic and social point of view after the creation by employers of playgrounds, bathing places, libraries, clubs, and gardens for the workingmen.

Another one, among the Belgian inquirers, the young labor leader, Henri de Man, reminds us that Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., has written that the relations between men connected with industry ought to be "human" relations. "Men are not only in this life to work. They need recreation; they live to mingle with their fellows, to love and worship God."

President Coolidge, in a speech delivered on April 14, 1924, announced that a *Federal Commission* would be appointed to draft a scheme for coördination be-

tween all institutions dealing with leisure time and recreation.

In many countries, there has been, of course, a natural tendency to make use of free time for physical training and sport. The ancient motto: "*Mens sana in corpore sano*" has been partly fulfilled. Your Emerson said once that before all, to succeed in life, one had to be a good animal. That was brutal but right. Sport occupies a great part of life in England and in the States.

Physical training, gymnastics, have been always honored in the Scandinavian countries, in Finland, and still more in Czechoslovakia. In this last country, which is the pride of post-war democratic Europe, I have seen villages where the finest building is neither the church nor the Town Hall but the gymnasium. The famous Sokol movement initiated by Tyrš and Fugner after the Revolution of 1848 played a great part in the movement for the liberation of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia.

In France and Belgium, officers and civilians who are discussing the reorganization of the army on the basis of a short term of service (six to ten months) insist on the fact that physical training during the leisure time of young working people would make much easier the task of military trainers and allow a reduction of the time during which soldiers have to be in camps or barracks.

England is probably the country in Europe where religious propaganda has been the most zealous in the special sphere which is of so great an interest for us. The Young Men's Christian Association has created in London and all big industrial towns of North England centers such as that of Tottenham

Court Road, in which workingmen and clerks are provided with all sorts of recreations.

Besides these, interesting settlements exist in the East End of London, where lectures and free courses on various matters are given, fees being not prescribed. The most famous of them is Toynbee Hall, which might be compared to the fine *Université Populaire*, "*La Coopération des Idées*," started in Paris, by a humble shoemaker, Gaston Deherme, at the time of the Dreyfus affair. Great Britain has a very good Public Libraries Act, and, as I have mentioned before, it is probably the only country in Europe which has made education compulsory between fourteen and eighteen.

Employers and trade-unions have their part in the organization of centers and foundations dealing with education of workingmen during their leisure time. May I cite what great philanthropists like Cadbury and Lord Leverhulme have done in their model garden-cities of Bourneville and Port Sunlight, and the existence, in Oxford, of that Ruskin College where prominent trade-union leaders have received substantial culture? It was the case, for instance, of Mr. Frank Hodges who started in life as a pit-boy in a mine, to become Civil Lord of the Admiralty in the Cabinet of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

A special chapter ought to be dedicated to the movement initiated in Great Britain by members of the Liberal party in order to deal with the question of leisure time in rural districts. That is, indeed, a great social problem. Everywhere in Europe, chiefly after the War, we witnessed a sort of congestion of great towns, "*les villes tentaculaires*," as the Belgian poet, Emile Verhaeren, called them. Sons of peasants

leave the country and the land and settle in the towns, earning their daily bread by working in factories. That is, of course, a great danger. What are the reasons of that exodus which has been going on for a long time, which really began thirty years ago, and which has been studied by M. Emile Vandervelde in his book: *L'Exode Rural et le Retour aux champs*? There are several reasons. One of them is that life in the country, in a small village, is sometimes very dull. Now, during the War, peasants' sons passing through great towns like Paris and London, have seen cinemas, theaters, the brilliant and gay side of social life in the Babylons of today. And in spite of unhealthy housing conditions, they prefer to live now in those towns, to enjoy recreation which they would always miss in the long winter of their own countryside.

I know that Mr. Lloyd George, desirous of giving to the Liberal party in England a new platform, drafted a whole program on agricultural matters and that some of his supporters, acting on his instructions, advocated the creation of country clubs for peasants. Each important center in rural districts would get its Central Hall, with cinema, library, etc.

A similar movement has been initiated in France in view of the creation of the so-called "*Foyers des Campagnes*."

Much ink has been spilled on the experiments tried in Russia since the rise of Bolshevism and under the Soviet régime. But among so many failures, we can guess, through the reading of an abundant literature on Soviet Russia, that the Bolsheviks have been lucky at least in one special sphere. Travelers back from Lenin's country, men whom I consider clever and

who are not suspected of having sympathy for Bolshevism, have told me how much they were impressed by visits they paid to peasants' clubs organized in rural districts far away from great centers. Those clubs provide sane recreation and a minimum of intellectual life they would always have missed, had those institutions not been created.

Curiously enough, there is now in Europe only one country where the principle of my bill on leisure time of workingmen has been embodied in a state organization, and that country is *Italy, Fascist Italy*. My bill was introduced into the Belgian Parliament in 1922. Some time later, I was asked to send a copy of it to Rome but I refused to have anything to do with the régime prevailing now in the unhappy country of Mazzini and Garibaldi.

Of course, the Fascist Government received from Brussels through its Embassy all documents concerning my bill. Two years later, I was—shall I say “delighted” or “astonished”?—to learn that the Italian Government had created an “*Opera Nazionale*,” a National Fund for Leisure Time which was exactly framed after my system. But I am aware that subventions are only given by it to Fascist organizations. On the contrary, I ask that all organizations, without discrimination as to their political or religious character, should be helped.

What about France? M. Justin Godart, who was the Labor Minister of the French Republic some years ago, stated at the sixth Geneva Conference that the eight-hour day had good consequences for the health and morality of the working class. He said: “Family life has been improved. Since 1919, the number of workingmen's gardens has grown (45 per cent

or more); alcoholism, which had such terrible effects on the French population and birth-rate, has decreased.”

A strong impulse has been given to interesting expressions of a new social life organized in order to secure health through physical training, knowledge through courses and lectures, both general and technical, and intelligent reading.

Interesting steps were taken after the War by some employers at Grenoble, Lyon, Angers, and in the Paris suburbs. The same in Belgium: the world-famous Cockerill Works of Seraing near Liège, organized close to the workshops, a workingmen's home, with cinema, library, swimming pool, etc. That workingmen's home was opened by Queen Elizabeth. But in France and Belgium, the recreation centers organized by employers have no success because the mentality of the workingman is such that he holds back when his employer offers something to him. It may be in the most generous and unselfish spirit. He always thinks that the employer is trying to bind him. We have to count with that psychology.

That is the reason for which I advocate a joint system, contributions coming from employers, trade-unions, coöperative societies and others, the state, the provinces, and cities, making a national fund to help all serious recreation centers, without regard to the social or political position of those who started them.

Besides those institutions due to employers, successful experiments have been made in France by artists and intellectuals and supported by the Labor movement, the General Confederation of Labor. Its President, Leon Jouhaux, has his mind often turned

toward the teaching of Jean Jaurès, the great socialist and humanitarian, the first martyr to the ideal of international peace. For Jaurès, socialism was synonymous with humanism. A French scholar who has been most influenced by the great spirit of Jaurès, M. Charles Andler, professor at the Sorbonne, published, not long ago, a book called: *L'humanisme travailliste* (Labor's Humanism), in which he drafts a program of general culture for workingmen.

Art and especially music and the theater ought to have a great place in the general training of the working class during its leisure time. But art of the highest quality. We have not to debase art to bring it to the level of the working class. We have, on the contrary, to raise the working class up to the level of the best creations of musicians, painters, sculptors, and writers. "Art and the people flourish together," says Richard Wagner somewhere in *Kunst und Revolution*. Do not say that I am too great an optimist and that workingmen cannot understand such works. We have made experiments, we have seen that real masterpieces of art, which are simple and clear just because they are masterpieces, never meet with such success as that we have witnessed sometimes in Paris, at the great concerts organized at the Trocadéro by the *Fêtes du Peuple* of M. Albert Doyen. In one of his essays on *Art and Socialism*, my friend, M. Vandervelde, reminds us that the poet, Walter von Stolzing, who is an incarnation of art, great and simple, inspired by nature, free of all scholastic tyranny, is repelled by the "Mastersingers of Nuremberg," but he sings then for the good people of the old city; there he is understood, and the good shoemaker, Hans Sachs, supports him. The theater played

a prominent part in national life in ancient Greece, or, in our days, in countries like Czechoslovakia. The great French historian, Michelet, hoped to see, before his death, national fraternity achieved with the help of the theater. (Berlioz was no less romantic when he said that music could make the greatest and noblest of all social revolutions.)

Before the War and after, thousands of performances have been given at very low prices in Paris and the suburbs by the best players of the Opera, the Opera Comique or the Comédie Française, thanks to an interesting foundation called the "*Trente ans de théâtre.*" M. Gémier who now controls the Paris Odeon and is the father of the so-called "*Société Universelle du Théâtre*" had a curious idea before the War. He created a great rural "*théâtre ambulant,*" transported on trucks through the French provinces, in which masterpieces of the classical period or good productions of modern drama were performed by some of the best Paris players.

M. Jacques Copeau, who came here during the War, with his company of the *Vieux Colombier* lives now in a small village of Burgundy, playing the comedies of Molière in barns, for the peasants. And before the War, M. Maurice Pottecher, a French playwright who is at the same time the owner of a great factory in Lorraine, as Fr. de Curel was, wrote dramas and comedies, which were performed in the open air at Bussang, by his men.

Let us not forget that besides what can be done with the help of professional players and musicians, for the artistic education of the people, the people itself may be of great help. That is chiefly true in those countries like Belgium, Germany, Holland, or Swit-

zerland, where the spirit of association is so strong. Thanks to the great emulation which prevails between societies, we have witnessed in Belgium wonderful achievements. I have conducted personal experiments of the greatest interest with the miners of my constituency, the black country around Mons. There are villages of ten to sixteen thousand inhabitants, each of them counting a great number of dramatic and amateur musical societies composed chiefly of workmen. In one of those villages, of thirteen thousand inhabitants, there are four bands, two choral societies, one of them numbering two hundred singers, four dramatic companies, playing in French and in the Walloon dialect. I am the president of one of those societies, a band of 120 musicians, the majority of them being miners. Last year, they had a total number of ninety-two concerts and rehearsals. Their repertoire contains such works as the First Symphony and the Egmont overture of Beethoven, two of Liszt's rhapsodies, works of Richard Wagner, Berlioz, Tchaikowsky, César Franck, etc. Another society, in the same miner's village, has one of the best conductors in Belgium, Captain Prevost.

It is by singing in those village societies that artists now world-famous like the tenor Ansseau, of the Chicago opera, and many others, revealed their talent. I heard Ansseau singing a solo in the choir when he was a member, absolutely unknown, of one of those companies near Mons.

Now I am convinced that in many places, dramatic and musical companies like those which are the pride of my constituency need some help from a central institution, such as I suggest in my bill. Help, not only, not chiefly, financial; they rather want advice,

documentation. But no central body has existed, up to now, to give it.

Of course, in the sphere of artistic education of the people, music and drama are very efficient agents. I know that it is not so easy to initiate workingmen to the works of painters and sculptors. Yet, nothing is impossible. I have made interesting experiments in organizing in mining districts, art exhibitions in which some of the best modern French and Belgian artists were represented. I then made inquiries about the impressions of workingmen who paid a visit to those exhibitions. At first, I noticed that they were chiefly interested in the "story" told by the picture, but afterward they realized that color, expression, and form were elements far more important in a work of art.

As to the masterpieces of the History of Art, they are now well diffused through Belgian schools and workingmen's clubs, thanks to the fine prints issued by The Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, which are now very well known in Belgium.

The Province of Hainaut was the first one in Belgium after the armistice to realize the importance of the problem of leisure time. My friend, M. Paul Pastur, one of the so-called "Permanent Deputies" of that province, created in 1919 the first "Provincial Commission of Leisure Time." Others exist now in two other provinces, Brabant and Liège.

These are the various sections of the Hainaut Commission :

1. Dwellings (building of houses, furniture and decoration of the workingman's home) ;
2. Gardens (and floral competitions) ;

3. *Petits Elevages* (breeding of poultry, pigeons, rabbits, sheep, goats, etc.) ;
4. Sport and physical training ;
5. Artistic education (art exhibitions, competitions between musical and dramatic societies, etc.) ;
6. General education (lectures, circulating libraries, travels, visits to galleries) ;
7. Moral education (this last section has taken the initiative of introducing into Belgium the American custom of Mother's Day, which is now very popular).

My ambition is to extend to the whole of Belgium the benefit of what has been done in my native province, through the first provincial commission of leisure time. I think it is only possible by law. The problem which we have to solve is a problem of education. Remember what Michelet said after Danton: "Which is the first duty of politics? Education. And the second part? Education."

Ignorance is the most tragic aspect of misery. "*C'est sans doute un lamentable spectacle que celui des souffrances physiques du pauvre,*" writes Renan in his *Avenir de la Science*. "*J'avoue pourtant qu'elles me touchent infiniment moins que de voir l'immense majorité de mes semblables, ayant peut-être des facultés intellectuelles et morales supérieures aux miennes, réduits à l'abrutissement, infortunés traversant la vie, naissant et mourant sans avoir un seul instant levé les yeux du servile instrument qui leur donne du pain, sans avoir un seul moment respiré Dieu.*"

Anatole France, who was a spiritual son of the same Renan, has written: "The ignorance of the masses has condemned democracy to death."

Now, we want to keep democracy alive!

III

LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM

IN his clever book on Belgium, Mr. Thomas Harrison Reed, Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, says :

By far the most complete and thorough political organization in Belgium is that of the *Parti ouvrier belge* (Belgian Workman's party), under which name the forces of socialism are arrayed. In unity of direction, discipline, democratic control, as well as in the variety and effectiveness of its means of propaganda, it not only stands first among Belgian parties, but well to the front among the parties of the world.

The P.O.B. or Belgian Labor party is one of the strongest sections of the so-called Second Labor and Socialist International, which was reorganized after the War, after a momentary split. It has always kept its special and genuine features within that international body. The other sections of the International which are the nearest to it are probably the British Labor party, the Swedish Social-Democratic party, very similar in spirit, and the Austrian party, whose organization is nearly the same.

The Belgian Labor party is properly a powerful federation of coöperative associations, trade-unions, mutual insurance societies, art and education groups, and political leagues. On the front of Brussels' *Maison du Peuple*, built by Victor Horta, one of the first pioneers of modern style in European architecture, you may see, painted in gold, the names of great social reformers such as Robert Owen, Saint-Simon,

Fourier, Proudhon, or Karl Marx, and inscriptions such as these: "Libraries, trade-unions, workmen's leagues, mutual insurance societies, art sections, bookshop, grocery, garments, shoes." Well, that is a symbol or rather a good summary of that complex of political, economic, and educational organizations which is called the *Parti ouvrier belge*.

According to its rules, one is affiliated to it through a trade-union, a "coöperative," or a mutual insurance society. You become a member of a district federation of the party if you are affiliated to the political league of your town or village; but you have to be at the same time a member of a labor union if there is one of your trade in the town where you live, or a member of the coöperative society, if there is one. At least, you have to join the local socialist union if there is neither a trade-union nor a coöperative nor a mutual-aid society in your place (which soon will no more be the case anywhere in Belgium).

The P.O.B. with its six hundred thousand members is thus a political body and an economic organization at the same time. Signor Mussolini would say a "Fascio," but a Fascio which has proved during these last years that it did not like Italian dictatorship and the Black Shirts. A memorial to Matteoti, killed by the Fascists, has been erected, indeed, in Brussels' *Maison du Peuple*.

You will notice immediately the great difference which exists between the labor movement in Belgium and that of other countries, say, for instance, France, notwithstanding the strong influence of French ideas and currents on Belgian political and intellectual life. In France, you have a cleavage of trade-unionism, coöperative movement, and socialist action. There

are ditches between them. French "Syndicalistes" or trade-unionists stick to the so-called *Charte d'Amiens*, providing that trade-unions cannot bind themselves to any political party. The "Coöperatives" are neutral. The Socialist party is a purely political organization with a small membership of a little more than one hundred thousand in spite of the fact that it polls over two million votes at the general elections. On the contrary, the Belgian Labor party may be considered as the political expression of trade-unions, coöperatives, and mutual insurance societies, which are in overwhelming majority socialist in King Albert's country. The P.O.B. is a powerful state within the state. In brief, we may say with Vandervelde that it grasps or tries to grasp man entirely, at every age, and in all manifestations of his existence. "Belgian workmen practice socialism at every moment of their existence, in their coöperative, their trade-union, their *mutuelle*, when they eat bread, when they buy shoes, when they make sport, take an insurance against fire or try to make their savings fructify."

Mr. Thomas Harrison Reed says more accurately:

A Belgian Socialist may, if he chooses, live an almost exclusively Socialist life. From the time that he is assisted into the world by the coöperative until the same organization helps to lay him decently in the ground, he need have none but Socialist associates. He learns to sing and dance with the *enfants du peuple*. His youthful enthusiasm finds a vent in the activities of the *jeunes gardes*. If he is inclined toward sports, he finds a place on the Socialist football team which plays on a Socialist field. He may join a gymnastic, musical, dramatic or study circle, according to his taste. When he starts to work, he joins a Socialist union and in-

sures in a Socialist mutuality. He eats Socialist food, wears Socialist clothes, sleeps in a Socialist bed, spends his evenings in a Socialist café or cinema, reads a Socialist paper. When he is ill, he finds relief in a Socialist clinic from a Socialist doctor who prescribes medicines which are compounded in a Socialist pharmacy. Finally, he sinks to rest in the blissful consciousness that his children will be even more Socialist than he. Land of violent partisanship as we have supposed ourselves to be, we know no such party life as this. Belgian Socialism is in a very real sense a state within the state, imperfectly developed as yet, but moving steadily by the daily extension of its practical communism toward the *État Ouvrier*.

There is surely some exaggeration and a bit of good American humor in this presentation, by an American scholar, of the state of things in my country and my party. I know excellent socialists in Belgium who elude some of the experiences quoted by Mr. Reed, and the professor from Michigan is surely wrong when he speaks of our communism. There is not the slightest trace of it and Moscow is our bitterest opponent. But it is a fact that the Belgian Labor party offers to us all those opportunities. I may add that in a mining village of my constituency the local coöperative society has bought a state-coach which is employed for the funeral of affiliated members if the relatives consider that the municipal state-coach is not pompous enough. . . .

There is another great difference to mention between the Belgian labor movement and that of other countries. While in France, Italy, or Russia, socialism was weakened and split by doctrinal disputes, it has displayed in Belgium since the foundation of

the party in 1885—or at least since 1894, when the first socialist deputies entered the Parliament—a remarkable sense of unity. Socialists in France, Italy, or Russia were always fond of discussions which were much like theological disputes, a sort of political Byzantinism. Remember the coexistence in France, during many years, of three or four socialist parties, the *Parti Ouvrier* of Guesde, besides the *Parti socialiste* of Jaurès and the old “Blanquist” organization. It is thanks to the long and strenuous efforts of Jaurès and to the conciliatory spirit of that great man that at last socialist unification was achieved in France on the eve of the War. But confusion lasted such a long time that even now parties which have nothing to do with the working-class movement take the name of socialist; for instance: the *Parti socialiste français*, the *Parti républicain socialiste* of MM. Briand and Painlevé, the *Parti radical-socialiste* which is an unmistakable element in all past and future majorities at the Palais Bourbon, and even the skeleton *Parti socialiste national*, a staff without troops, whose general is M. Gustave Hervé, a passionate pre-war anti-militarist who has been changed by the War into a French jingo. So, in Italy. Before the War, Mr. Benito Mussolini, who was the leader of the Extreme Left, succeeded at the Congress of Reggio Emilia, in pushing outside the Socialist party that real friend of the people, Leonida Bissolati, who had committed the crime of being too great a moderate, hostile to that violence which was and is yet in the temper of the Duce. After the War, Italian socialists indulged in fanatical disputes on Marxian Holy Scripture. While doctors of the faith were devoted to that job, as their predecessors of Byzantium debated the question of

the sex of angels, the Black Shirts were getting ready; and the Socialist party of Italy could do nothing in the autumn of 1922 against them.

The fight in Russia between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, between Kerensky and Lenin, did not begin in 1917. It was already very fierce before the War and the Socialist International had to deal with it on many occasions. There has been nothing like that in the Belgian labor movement. Of course, as we will see later on, there were some disputes in the beginning between the sturdy Flemish temper and the hot-heads of Wallonia, and even now there are shades within the P.O.B. on certain current political problems. But Belgian workingmen always preferred action and social reforms to phraseology, doctrinal disputes, or the vain and ritual claim of a complete "integral" revolution. They like discipline. Nowhere in Belgium is the national motto, *L'Union fait la force* (Union makes strength), so well enforced as in the Labor party.

This is the reason that the propaganda of Moscow met in my country with complete failure. At its Congress of October, 1920, the Belgian Labor party repudiated the Third International by a vote of 493,000 to 70,000. A few weeks later, another Congress adopted measures against some disguised communists, chiefly from Brussels, who were trying to organize revolutionary "cells" within the party. They had to leave it.

From that time on, Belgian socialists took a strong position against communism, which has infected other European countries. At the election of 1921, a communist ticket received in the Brussels district 2,226 votes, while the regular socialist candidates polled

72,562 votes. At the 1925 election, the Labor party won 78 seats out of 186 in the Parliament (we and the Catholics are the two strongest groups, equal in number). The communists only got two; one in Brussels and one in Liège. In the mining constituency of Mons, I was elected by nearly sixty thousand votes, while my communist opponent secured hardly eleven hundred. In that district, and in Flanders, near Mouscron and Menin, thousands of workingmen daily cross the border because they earn their bread in French factories and mines of Valenciennes, Maubeuge, and Halluin, districts where the French Communist party is pretty strong. They have resisted up till now the very active French communist propaganda and remain faithful to the Belgian Labor party, characterized, of course, by Moscow as a party of traitors and valets of capitalism.

The success of the P.O.B. and the great part it has taken since the armistice in Belgian public life and in the control of affairs, are due a great deal to its moderateness, its so-called "*Réformisme*," its realism and businesslike spirit, its sense of national interest combined in the happiest way with a real faithfulness to the spirit of international friendship, its horror of violence and demagoguery. The Belgian Labor party has displayed a certain sort of courage which is for me of the highest value in this disturbed period of history—that is the courage of moderation. May I add that the Belgian working class can be proud of the wisdom and cleverness of its leaders, who have been four times in office since the armistice? Some of those men are well known beyond the frontiers of their small country. That is the case, for instance, of M. Emile Vandervelde, formerly For-

eign Minister, a delegate at the Peace Conference, one of the signatories of the Locarno agreement, the pre-war and present President of the Labor and Socialist International. That is the case, too, of M. Louis de Brouckère, who was a remarkable chairman at the preparatory Disarmament Conference at Geneva, and of M. Henri Lafontaine, Vice-Chairman of the Belgian Senate, one of the fathers of the Interparliamentary Conference, who was granted one of the Nobel prizes for peace.

The party has got the masses, but it has got the brains, too. The speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, M. Emile Brunet, a great barrister, is a socialist. He has been reëlected with an enormous majority, at the opening of each session, even when his party was in the opposition, as is now the case.

It is interesting to notice that when it was created in 1885, at the *Maison du Cygne*, one of the finest old buildings of the famous Brussels "Grand Place," or main square, a proposal was made tending to call it "the Belgian Socialist party." But some delegates remarked that the word "socialist" would make the workmen afraid. Jean Volders, a Brussels leader, said:

The idea of grouping all forces under the red flag of socialism is not a bad one and personally I would be for it, were it not that I fear we would not succeed in getting with us immediately the mass of workingmen. We had better try to build a Labor Party with all elements of the working class, and let us draft a program which will not make the workingmen afraid.

César de Paepe approved, and in spite of some resistance among extremists the word socialist was

avoided. It was an early example of that moderation, of that prudence which has so often been displayed by the party during its history of forty-three years. But, exactly on the date of its birth, on April 5, 1885, a proposal tending to refuse affiliation to "intellectuals" was made and defeated. It has never been resumed since then.

Louis Bertrand, a Walloon marble-polisher who, when a young man, carved the letterbox of the House of Parliament where he became a vice-chairman after the War, attended that historical sitting at the Cygne, the Swan Inn. He wrote not long ago in an interesting study on the birth of socialism in Belgium:

How could we summarize the main traits of the Belgian Labor Party? As to the doctrinal foundations, it is much like the other socialist parties, but as to the methods and organization, it has a character of its own. It is revolutionary as to its final scope which is the transformation of the capitalistic system. But it is not impossible to make such a revolution slower and without bloodshed and violence. Our party is at the same time realistic and "reformist" when it tries to improve the actual social *milieu* by means of reforms. And its mode of organization is unique in the world.

The P.O.B. has played a great part in the restoration of Belgium after the War. That work has been achieved in a social peace practically never disturbed. It is partly through its loyal coöperation and with its help that stabilization of the Belgian currency was possible in 1925.

Far more important is what the party did for what I should call the moral stabilization and the mental recovery of Belgium after the War. I think it is worth giving you some particulars about its achievements in the sphere of anti-alcoholism. Belgium was, before

the War, like some industrial or rural districts of France, one of the countries in the world where the consumption of spirits and the number of *cafés* was at the highest.

According to statisticians, the consumption of alcohol was five and one-half liters or five quarts per inhabitant per year while the consumption of beer included in that general figure was 223 liters per inhabitant. It means rather light beer, of course. In fact, before the War, a Belgian citizen worked two months per year to pay for his drinks. I remember those poor miners of my native place who worked ten to twelve hours underground (nine hours since 1912) and who, coming straight from the pit, went into the many *cafés* in the vicinity of the collieries and there, with their white eyes in a black face, remained a long time, standing along the bar, drinking many small glasses of gin. They said it was to make the coal, swallowed during their work, go down easier. I remember also that so-called "Lost Monday" when hundreds of inn-keepers of the Marolles, a poor district of Brussels, would give free gin to their customers, with the hope of seeing them come back, and of course pay well, all the other days in the year.

The Belgian Labor party, supported by great scientists such as Dr. Bordet, a Nobel prize winner, and Cardinal Mercier, started a vigorous anti-alcoholic campaign under the leadership of M. Emile Vandervelde, who was formerly a good Templar and has recently substituted temperance for abstinence.

During the War the sale of liquors was practically suppressed in Belgium, thanks to their high price and rarity. On the eve of the armistice, the Belgian Government which had settled in Le Havre and had

been granted by France the rights of extraterritoriality, prepared a decree which prohibited the sale of spirits in liberated Belgium. It was enforced and became a real law in August, 1919. That law increased very greatly the excise and customs taxes on alcoholic drinks, and they were once more increased in 1926, when the currency was stabilized. The tax on the opening of new *cafés* was increased too. The sale of spirits was prohibited in all public places, *cafés*, hotels, restaurants, etc. Only wine and beer are allowed in those places. The sale of spirits is only allowed in the groceries and special wine shops, but you must buy *two liters* (two quarts) at least. It seems to be rather a curious system, but it works well.

The real aim of the law was to abolish that tantalizing character of the *café* where people would sit or stand a long time, in a sort of mutual excitement, drinking one small glass of gin after the other, everyone treating the party and paying for a round. Two bottles of French brandy or benedictine means quite a price today in Belgium; and in spite of high wages, it is difficult for a workingman to spend such a lot of money. Of course, it is always possible for some people to buy the two liters together and drink at one person's home. Our semi-prohibition law has more than once been infringed. Still, as it works, moderate and reasonable as it is, such an act has excellent consequences. The number of *cafés* has decreased greatly: one hundred thousand instead of two hundred thousand. The consumption of spirits per inhabitant fell from 5½ liters in 1913 to 1.98 liters in 1921, 2.39 liters in 1922, 2.52 liters in 1923. Figures since that time are nearly the same. Beer has passed from 223 liters in 1913 to 138 liters in 1920, 169 liters

in 1921, 202 liters in 1922, 234 in 1923, while the use of wine decreased greatly during these last years, due to the heavy customs taxes. The figures I quote are still big figures, but the situation has greatly improved since 1914. The statistics of prisons, hospitals, and asylums show that the effects of the so-called Vandervelde Act are good. The inn-keepers and spirit dealers have organized public demonstrations against it, but they have not succeeded up till now. Their action had no echo among the working class or in the Parliament. They once solemnly brought a petition to King Albert. He received them in his palace at Brussels—and it remained there—and nothing happened. King Albert is very popular in his country. But he is faithful to the Constitution and he knows perfectly well that Parliament alone must decide. Our semi-prohibition act will last because it is a moderate one and because Belgium likes compromise.

The economic effects have been great. The enforcement of the eight-hour day in Belgium had no bad effect on production, which has increased substantially in some trades. It is due partly to a better industrial organization, to a more general use of machines, but also to the fact that Belgian workers, drinking less than before the War, are better workers. Statistics show that the number of accidents at work has been greatly lessened. The Belgian working class is satisfied with the new régime. The number of *cafés* has been reduced. Workingmen drink less, but they eat more pastry. Instead of spending hours in the *cafés*, they live more at home, they go with their wives to the motion pictures or to the football grounds. The amount of savings has increased re-

markably. Of course, there is some bootlegging, clandestine production or sale of spirits. There are cigar-shops or groceries with concealed rooms (trenches, as they are called) where people drink rapidly a glass of gin or brandy at a very high price. There are—or rather, there used to be till some months ago—clubs which had multiplied in fairly good number in some towns and which were created with the sole aim of selling glasses of liquor to clubmen of a strange sort, clubs of course not being public places as mentioned by the law. The Minister of Justice announced recently that drastic measures would be taken to stop that and to have the law enforced as it must be. I will not say: *Dura Lex Sed Lex* (Law is hard but it is Law), because our legislation, as it stands, is a moderate act whose good social effects have been hardly neutralized by bootlegging. On a very few occasions, there were incidents of a bad character. I refer, for instance, to policemen or excise agents in disguise, who entered *cafés* and restaurants and ordered spirits which were served to them in cups or as though they were a “vin blanc,” a small glass of white wine. Even those who, like me, are anxious to see the law enforced, do not like those tricks of policemen and officials. They are as an instigation to law-breaking.

I wish now to give you another example of what Labor did in another sphere in favor of Belgium's moral stabilization. Before the War, there were bitter fights between Catholics and non-Catholics, owing to the fact that on many occasions the Catholic clergy interfered in politics. Now, labor leaders, after the War, insisted on the fact that they had nothing to do

with religious matters, with the faith of working people, and quoted the famous German socialist motto of the Erfurt Conference: "*Religion ist Privatsache*" (Religion is a question of conscience). This has contributed a great deal to soften domestic quarrels, but, as I explained before, in my first chapter, language has taken the place of religion. The attitude of the Labor party has delayed for a long time the separation of Church and State and a sound solution of the school problem, religious schools like public schools being subsidized by the State.

My last point will be the attitude of Labor in foreign affairs. I dare to say that no party has done more in Belgium to promote peace, disarmament, and international reconciliation. It was not always so easy. The memory of the great sufferings of war and invasion is still very strong in the Belgian people. We have to forgive, but it is difficult to forget. When the Labor party opposed the occupation of the Ruhr Valley it was represented as pro-German by the other parties and by the press. It was a hard time for us. In the time of inflation we cared in Belgium for hundreds of poor Austrian children who had been sent to us by our Viennese comrades, while Cardinal Mercier did the same for Hungarian children.

Of course, some minds are yet intoxicated in Belgium by the virus of war spirit. When that is the case, with people whose houses were burned, whose relatives were shot by German soldiers in the first weeks of the War, it is very difficult to be angry with them. But what about professional jingoes, hideous clowns of the nationalist demagoguery, who have no such excuse? I will tell a story, a very short and simple

story, about a certain Louvain celebration. Mr. Graves, State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York, who spoke at that Louvain celebration, after returning from Europe, said in a statement to the press that Cardinal Mercier, if he had lived, would not have approved the disputed inscription. He added that in spite of the fact that the Belgian people vividly recall the circumstances in which the Louvain library was ruthlessly destroyed, the majority were against the inscription.

The library of Louvain University was, before the War, in a fine old Gothic building. That building was burned in August, 1914, by panic-stricken German soldiers. After the War, Mgr. Ladeuze, rector of Louvain University, put on the ruins an inscription in good and clear French recalling and stigmatizing that crime of the Kaiser's army. Now, a new library has been built, thanks to collections made in various countries, thanks chiefly to American generosity, on a new site, at a place where before the War there was no library at all, and that new building is not a copy of the destroyed one. Why should an inscription in bad Latin be put on it to tell that it was destroyed by Teutonic furor, when that was not the case? Mgr. Ladeuze refused to do it. He was supported by all the professors of Louvain University and by the Labor press, while the other papers attacked him. Mgr. Ladeuze loves his country but he is not an ass, and I do not think that Cardinal Mercier was one. That is the true story of the famous Louvain celebration.

IV

LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM

(Continued)

IN my first chapter on Labor and Socialism in Belgium, I made a clear distinction between socialism and communism and pointed to the difference which exists, within the so-called Second International, between the labor movement in Belgium and that of other countries, say, for instance, France. I have tried also to summarize the main traits of the Belgian socialist organization, which is a complex of powerful coöperative societies and trade-unions, mutual insurance associations, art and education groups, and political leagues. I insisted at last on the great sense of unity displayed in their movement by Belgian workmen who always preferred a step-to-step action and substantial reforms to mere phraseology, doctrinal disputes, and the ritual claim of an "integral" revolution.

Let us now see in what conditions and circumstances that party was born.

A general survey of Belgian history shows that, prior to modern democracy, the spirit of association has been always very strong among the workingmen of Flemish and Walloon provinces. The power of guilds in Bruges, Ghent, or Liège, in medieval and modern times, has checked on many occasions the political designs of the kings of France, of the dukes of Burgundy, and of the crown of Spain.

The first labor organizations of the capitalist pe-

riod date from 1842: they were neutral trade-unions, such as the Hoodmakers and Typographers in Brussels or the Jewelers (1852), strictly devoted to the defense of corporate interest.

Special mention must be made of the part played in Belgian public life by famous political refugees—writers, social reformers, and agitators—who settled in Belgium just before and after the Revolutions of 1848 or after the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon in 1851. Generally speaking, they enjoyed in that small country, which had been granted in 1830 one of the most liberal constitutions in the world, the widest hospitality. I say that, in spite of the fact that at least two of them, Karl Marx and Victor Hugo, were expelled from the Belgian territory. Besides the German author of *Das Kapital* and the great French poet, I will remind you of the names of Engels, the comrade and collaborator of Marx, of his passionate French opponent in socialism, Proudhon, and, later on, Victor Considerant, an engineer who was a faithful disciple of Charles Fourier.

The writings and verbal propaganda of those men had a great influence on some learned Belgian radicals and cultivated workingmen. Socialist associations, such as the Union Democratique (1847), the Solidaires (1854), or the Association du Peuple (1860), were founded under the influence or at the request of Marx and Engels. Those associations have disappeared. Another one survives in the powerful Textile Association of Ghent, those “fraternal weavers” who met for the first time in 1857 in the cellar of an inn called “The Little Black Dog” (*Het-Zwart Hondcken*). Those weavers were responsible for the first big strikes in Belgium. Many of them

were chased and sentenced. But, thanks to the stubborn resistance of those men who were called the "iron heads" of Flanders, wages were increased and the truck system canceled in the factories of Ghent.

The "fraternal weavers," whose banner bore that curious inscription: "God and the Law" (*God en de wet*), became one of the first Belgian sections of the First Labor International. Other sections were founded in Verviers and in the mining districts of the Hainaut in 1867.

In the time when the "fraternal weavers" were fighting against the Flemish employers, one of their countrymen, the Baron de Colins, wrote his book: *Qu'est-ce que la science sociale?* (What is social science?)

The Baron de Colins had been an officer in the army of Napoleon. After Waterloo, he devoted his time to the writing of big books on social philosophy and economics. He drafted a whole system in which spiritualism mixes in a curious way with a theory on the nationalization of land very near to that which has been exposed by your Henry George in *Progress and Poverty*. He has yet a handful of disciples in France and Belgium. His "collectivist" writings had a great influence on César de Paepe, a Brussels typographer who became a physician and who was granted by popular gratitude the title of "Médecin des Pauvres" (Doctor of the Poor). César de Paepe was a member of the First International. He tried in vain to conciliate at the Hague Conference in 1872, and after, the antagonistic tendencies of Marx and Bakunin. He could not prevent the disintegration of the International. Later on, the good typographer-doctor, who may be considered as the real father of

Belgian socialism, had another opportunity of trying in his own country a cure through his conciliatory spirit among rival radical tendencies. A lively debate was going on between the first workingmen's leaders, who stuck to the Marxian principle of the war of classes and to the theory of "historic materialism," and prominent Belgian scholars like Hector Denis and Guillaume de Greef who were rather under the influence of Proudhon and Auguste Comte and believed that socialism was not simply a question of stomach but also of brains and morality. In spite of his close connection with the working class and the Marxist elements, César de Paepe tried always to be a link between both parties. It is partly thanks to him that the Belgian Labor party enjoyed later the enthusiastic coöperation of scientists like Hector Denis and Guillaume de Greef.

The program of the party, born in 1885 in the circumstances which I have recalled, was, thanks to César de Paepe, like a synthesis of German science and French idealism. We may add, too, that the spirit of self-help displayed by the pioneers of Rochdale in their coöperative society, the first in history, had passionate admirers in the Flemish typographer, Edouard Anseele, and the Walloon marble-polisher, Louis Bertrand, who were also among the founders of the P.O.B. and are more specially the initiators of the coöperative movement in Belgium.

We have seen that Belgium is at the crossways of French, German, and English civilizations and often takes something from each of them. That is true in the socialist sphere as in other expressions of the intellectual life. That does not prevent the Belgian

Labor movement from having something of its own in spirit and method of organization.

The history of the P.O.B. from 1885 to 1919 is practically the history of an arduous and tenacious campaign for the conquest of equal manhood suffrage "pure and simple, one man, one vote," as a Belgian motto used to say.

In 1866 the great Brussels barrister, Edmond Picard, who became later a socialist senator, issued a *Manifeste des ouvriers*, in which he claimed equal suffrage, "*le suffrage universel*." That document ended with these words:

We are waiting with patience. If the reform which we claim is refused to us, we will know how to fight to win it. We are devoted to Labor, and a great task does not frighten us. The bourgeoisie has fought splendidly to obtain what it enjoys today. We are able to fight like it, and we are resolved to do so. It has given to us an example of activity, energy and sturdiness. We will follow it.

Limited suffrage, *censitarisme*, had existed in Belgium since 1830. Graduated property qualifications characterized the electoral system, voting being compulsory. The "*pays légal*" was composed of a little more than 130,000 voters, paying a certain amount of taxes. The other Belgian citizens had nothing to say in public affairs. In the first days of 1886, a Walloon barrister, Alfred Defuisseaux, whose grandfather had greeted General Dumouriez, the victor of Jemappes, the soldier of the French Revolution, as an apostle of Liberty in the cathedral of Mons, issued a *Catechism of the People* which was circulated throughout French-speaking Belgium. It was written in the manner of the *Cahiers du Tiers État*

by questions and answers: Q. "Working man, what art thou?" A. "I am a slave." Defuisseaux invited the miners of Mons, Liège, and Charleroi to march on Brussels. Very serious events occurred—bloodshed and fire—in the so-called Black Country, and such was yet the case in 1893. But this time, the Government was shaken, and a first revision of the Constitution occurred. A majority of two-thirds is necessary to amend any article of our fundamental Pact. The Parliament has to decide first if the time has come to amend the Constitution and which articles of it ought to be amended. It has occurred only twice since 1830: the first time in 1893 and the second time in 1919-1920. In 1893, the majority of two-thirds was secured for the amendment of Article 47. One vote was given to every citizen of twenty-five years of age, additional votes being granted according to the taxes paid to the State, the rate of income or the degrees held by the voter, if he had studied in a high school or a university. But no citizen had the right of polling more than three votes (four at municipal elections).

Liberals of the left wing, like Paul Janson, accepted the compromise but the Labor party did not bow. The leaders declared that they would go on with their fight for equal suffrage, recalling the pledge taken in 1890 by one hundred thousand men at Saint Giles's Park, Brussels:

Les ouvriers et les démocrates de Belgique réunis le 10 Avril, 1890, au parc de Saint Gille en une démonstration solennelle, jurent de combattre sans trêve, ni repos, jusqu'au jour où par l'établissement du suffrage universel, le peuple belge aura réellement conquis une patrie.

(Workingmen and democrats of Belgium, meeting on

April 10, 1890, in a solemn demonstration at St. Giles's Park, swear to fight without truce or rest till the day when, through the establishment of equal suffrage, the Belgian people will have a real fatherland.)

The Chamber of Deputies of 1894 was the first one to be recruited through the new system of voting. Twenty-eight socialists were elected, but the Liberal party was smashed, and the Catholic party, which had ruled the country during thirty-five years, had a majority of seventy votes in a House of 152 members. That majority faded from seventy in 1894 to six in 1910 (it was eight in 1914), while the socialists passed from twenty-eight to seventy-eight in 1928, in a House of 186, the Liberal party vanishing slowly as nearly everywhere in Europe. The Liberal party enjoyed a temporary renaissance through proportional representation which was introduced in 1899 in the electoral system, after a great agitation in the country.

The Belgian Labor party sustained its first hard defeat in 1902 when it organized a great political strike "for the conquest of equal suffrage" with the hope of bringing pressure on the Government. Three hundred and fifty thousand workingmen stopped work. But the Government and its majority resisted stubbornly. M. Woeste, the old conservative leader, said to the socialists: "It is not conciliation that you ask, but our abdication. Well, you will never get it!" In that same sitting of the Parliament, Anseele, who is a modern reincarnation of Jacques van Artevelde, the famous Flemish leader of the guilds in the fifteenth century, said to the Right, with his passionate eloquence:

You do not know us. We are tenacious. We are of the people of Flanders, square at the base, square in the shoul-

ders, square in ideas. You will be knocked out. Thirty years ago, we were twelve altogether to build the Labor party, twelve apostles without Judas. You had everything for you: power, money, all the traditions of your Catholic church, and we, we were twelve miserable sons of workmen and peasants. We began and we were covered with dirt in the streets. Now 350,000 men strike in this country to conquer their political rights!

But riots occurred in Brussels, Louvain, Houdeng-Goegnies. Some people were killed by the gendarmes and the *Garde Civique*. Immediately, the leaders of the P.O.B. stopped the strike. The men resumed work grumblingly in some of the districts. Notwithstanding that defeat, the idea of a new general strike for the conquest of equal suffrage reappeared some years after. The political strike has been a genuine method of the Belgian labor movement. It was sometimes imitated in other countries, for instance in Austria. "We are going to speak Belgian," the Austrian socialists then said; and still, as you know, there is no Belgian language, my countrymen speaking French or Flemish.

After the general election of 1912 which brought a temporary and unexpected increase of the Catholic majority in the Belgian Parliament, some hot-heads of the Labor party favored a fresh political strike. They were defeated at the June Congress, but the resolution which was then passed declared:

We are for a general strike; but we are against an improvised one; we want to prepare it; it will be formidable and irresistible. It will remain quiet in spite of all provocations and all eventualities.

The strike was declared on April 14, 1913. More than 450,000 men and women stopped work. The har-

bor of Antwerp, the mines, the quarries, the iron trade, the textile works of Ghent and Verviers, other factories, were at a standstill. The Belgian Labor party had organized popular kitchens. It declared that the strike would last weeks if necessary. It lasted, in fact, eight days, because the General Council of the P.O.B. decided that the working class could resume work after a statement made by the Prime Minister, M. de Broqueville. Negotiations had been going on between the Prime Minister, the great employers, and the leader of the P.O.B., M. Emile Vandervelde. In spite of a bitter resistance among his conservative friends who relied on their great electoral victory of the year before, M. de Broqueville took a solemn pledge: the cause of equal suffrage was won. As recognized later by prominent Catholic and Liberal leaders, the last Belgian general strike had been impressive in its calm and had displayed the stupendous power of the Labor party.

A proof of the practical and *juste milieu* spirit of the Belgian people is, perhaps, given by the fact that the Catholic party, in spite of its big majorities in the Parliament, yielded always opportunely to the pressure of circumstances. Extensive social legislation was elaborated between 1894 and 1914, including acts for compensation, Sunday rest, old-age pensions, regulation of women's and children's work, limitation of workdays to nine hours for coal miners, etc. But, to be just, we must say that all those social measures were taken not only under the influence of the growing Socialist party, but also under the pressure of Christian Democracy. The extension of suffrage had called to life, in the circle of the old Catholic party, a democratic group whose leaders were

working along the lines indicated by the famous Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII.

The Church of Rome, which will hardly resign her claim to temporal power, and whose priests, in so many countries, have often interfered with politics, has realized that to keep control of the peasants and workingmen, who are an enormous majority in her rank and file, she has to yield to those unavoidable democratic tendencies which have appeared among them during the last twenty years and chiefly after the War. Within the "Centrum," which is the German Catholic party, we have witnessed the same split as in Belgium. There is a left wing with Dr. Wirth and a right one with Dr. Marx. That process was also going on, on the eve of the Fascist revolution, within the Italian Catholic forces. The Deputy Dom Miglioli, a priest from Cremona, who has been assassinated by the Black Shirts, and who was with Dom Sturzo, the leader of the *Partito popolare*, made some very advanced speeches "which the Roman curia had certainly approved," says Mr. Sauerwein in a curious contribution to the *Atlantic Monthly* of August, 1928, on the question of the temporal power of the Holy See.

The progress of Christian Democracy was particularly great in Flanders after the War. Flemish workers supported by the lower clergy remain faithful sons of Rome and attend mass on Sundays, but on leaving the church they go to their trade-unions or their political league where they urge social and linguistic reforms. Their leaders compete sometimes in demagoguery with extremists and hot-heads of other parties.

It is a fact that socialists coöperated during some

months in 1925 with those Christian Democrats. Both are expressions of the labor movement. They are divided by some questions, for instance, the separation of Church from State and the education problem, which is in Belgium, as you know, an aspect of the religious problem. But on many lines, for instance in foreign affairs, military questions, social legislation, socialists and Christian Democrats are often in full agreement. We will see perhaps in the future another and durable coöperation of those two parties in the government of the country. For that reason and many others, Belgium deserves the name which has been given to her by a French author, M. Henri Charriaud: "A land of experiments."

Before going on with the history of Belgian Labor, I want to summarize in a few words what that great party achieved in forty-two years of its existence. In 1886, there were Belgians who used to work twelve and thirteen hours a day for a miserable wage. During the winter season, which means six months in the year, coal miners would not see more than once in a week the light of the sun. Women, and children under twelve, worked in mines, cotton and wool mills. Working people had no rights, no education, and they were treated as beasts. Now, they are citizens with the same rights as their employers. Education is compulsory. Workers look decent. They live in better houses, they enjoy a higher wage, the eight-hour day, leisure, family life, a very extensive social legislation. The work of women and children has been regulated by law and forbidden in the mines.

The radical change which has occurred in the condition of the working class is due before all to its united effort of forty-two years, to its contributions, and the

power of its organizations. In that way, Karl Marx was right when he said: "The emancipation of workingmen will be achieved by the workingmen themselves." But the spirit of employers has improved also. We were not accustomed, before the War, to hear in Belgium employers or their political friends of the *bourgeois* parties ask greater comfort and greater participation in life and leisure for the wage-earners as did the Republican candidate in the United States in his nomination speech. They are beginning to do it and to balance, like Mr. Hoover, a highly praised individualism by the principle of an equal chance for every citizen.

But, may I add that when your great countryman—who will be ever blessed by Belgium as the best friend of unhappy days—opposes individualism to socialism, when he says that "socialism bids all runners in life to end the race equally and holds back the speedy to the pace of the slowest," he is contradicted by all responsible leaders who have written on the ethics of socialism, for instance, by Eugene Fourniere, a French socialist author, in his essay on individualism.

The first and real aim of socialism is, in my opinion, to give every citizen, through a better organization of the production and distribution of wealth, that equal opportunity praised by Mr. Hoover, what we call in French "*l'égalité du point de départ.*" It means giving to all a minimum standard of life. It does not mean that skilled labor will be paid, even in a socialist society, like the work of a day laborer.

I think that there is no contradiction between socialism and individualism, if individualism is taken in the high sense of a complete expansion of human

personality. But, perhaps, the same words do not apply everywhere to the same things.

Socialism has only declared war in principle on revenue which is not associated with work. The Constitution of Soviet Russia says that the man who does not work is not entitled to eat. Saint Paul had already said something of that kind. But the fundamental difference between socialism and bolshevism is that the former tries to reach the final goal, which is socialized property, gradually and through a normal evolution, in the structure of Democracy, while the communists stick to the false and mystical conception of the "Zusammenbruch," of a total and sudden collapse of capitalism. Communists are for dictatorship, the dictatorship of a minority, while socialists pledge themselves to respect the golden rule of the majority. Even Rosa Luxemburg, that undaunted Amazon of Social Revolution, who was stabbed in Germany by the Whites, denounced the failure of bolshevist dictatorship, in spite of the sympathy she displayed at one time toward the October Revolution in Russia. She said on the eve of her death: "The historical mission of the Proletariat, when it gets in power, is to substitute a socialist democracy for *bourgeois* democracy, and not to destroy democracy itself." Still, I recognize frankly that the supreme goal for socialism in Belgium, as anywhere, is the socialization of private property, and I suppose there are among you people who will say: "The method of those gentle socialists reminds us of Thomas Heywood's play called 'A Woman Killed by Kindness,' and we do not care whether we are to be brutally suppressed or mildly strangled."

Now is not property, like everything in the world,

ruled by the law of evolution? Can you forget that—disregarding Soviet Russia—there were periods when private ownership was an exception, that even now there are countries where it is so? And moreover, we advocate socialization of the great sources of wealth, “*les grands moyens de production et d’échange*”: it means mines and minerals, quarries, railways, hydroelectric power, great estates. We never dreamed of the foolish idea of robbing a working-man of the dwelling-house he purchased with his savings or the small peasant farmer of the land he has made richer and more fertile by his arduous work. Referring to agriculture, I may cite the fact that the Belgian Labor party, which used to be represented earlier as an enemy of the peasants, has advocated during recent years a policy in favor of the tenants, who are a majority among our farmers. The land is rented to them in Belgium according to old customs and through verbal agreements—no written contract. We claim for the tenant an amendment of the Law, of the Civil Code. We urge that the land should be rented to the farmers for a legal minimum of nine years, through a written agreement. We say it is necessary, not only from the point of view of social justice, but also in the interest of the national welfare and of increased production. If the tenant is not assured of keeping the rented land for a sufficient number of years, he will do nothing to improve it and the production at the same time. We are for the tenant against the big landowner, but our program is not only one of justice—it is at the same time a program of national efficiency.

One of the main statements of Karl Marx was that property was being steadily more concentrated in the

hands of a minority which was becoming always smaller, and he forecasted the time when that minority would be so small that, social interest prevailing over the privilege of a handful of magnates, they could be deprived of ownership through the payment of a reasonable indemnity. Karl Marx had a French brother-in-law, Paul Lafargue, who characterized that conjecture in very picturesque words: "*Ce jour là, les expropriateurs seront les expropriés.*"

The prophecy of Karl Marx has not always been justified by social evolution, especially in agriculture. The post-war period has been characterized by what some people called the green rising, an agrarian reform which provided the peasants of eastern Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania) with ground which is now their private property. In spite of some appearances and of boasting communist phraseology, that is also the case in Soviet Russia. But what about industry and business, what about the smashing of the middle class and in some countries, of the vertical and horizontal trusts of Stinnes in Germany, of the world steel trust, and of others of the same kind, of the chain stores which are spreading, I am told, in your country as in Europe? There is now in Belgium a bank, *La Société Générale*, which controls all the vital industries of the country and has the greatest number of concessions in the Congo. Do you really think that the state has not to deal with such an evolution? Does it mean that all trade, all industries, all public services ought to be run by the state? That is another question. Belgian socialists have been always anxious to explain that they were not for the control of public utilities and of industrial

production by red tape. Our ideal is a different one which I shall try to explain.

In conclusion, there is now, in some parts of the world, a sort of No Man's Land between socialism and capitalism. How are we going to cross it? I hope, in any case, that it will be done in peace, without violence, without hatred, and that the blood of poor and great mankind will be spared. The great German philosopher and poet Nietzsche has written: "It needs much chaos to make a star." Let us hope that the men of tomorrow will make, not a star, but a whole world worth living in, and yet avoid chaos.

V

LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM

(Continued)

WHEN the World War broke out, there was not the slightest hesitation within the ranks of the Belgian Labor party, in view of that brutal fact which Dr. Rudolf Breitscheid, member of the German Reichstag, condemned most severely in Brussels recently: the violation of Belgian neutrality and the invasion of Belgian territory by the Kaiser's army. The party took a strong position in favor of national defense. This principle had been justified, moreover, in a resolution passed at the International Socialist Conference of Stuttgart. A meeting of the International's executive took place in Brussels in the last days of July, 1914. I remember the great public meeting organized on that occasion in the Cirque Royal. Jaurès, Rosa Luxemburg, and Haase, president of the German Parteivorstand, spoke at that meeting: all three have since been assassinated by fanatics of reaction. Haase had strong words against German imperialism, and said that the German working class would revolt rather than support the policy embodied in the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia. Now, he was the same man who, six days later, in the Reichstag, read, in the name of the socialist group, a statement in favor of the war expenses.

The Belgian socialists who had heard Haase speaking on July 29 in Brussels were not the less eager

to denounce the "treachery of German Social Democracy."

Now, we think that Haase was sincere in both cases, and so was Herman Müller, the present German Reichschancellor, when he said in Paris, on the thirtieth, to French and Belgian socialists that the eventuality of Germany's attacking France seemed excluded to him. The truth is probably this: Haase and Müller, when back in Berlin, were separated from the outside world by a sort of Chinese wall. They got no other news than that of a Russian mobilization, of the rush of Rennenkampf's Cossacks through eastern Prussia and the fancied attack of French airmen on Nuremberg. They were misled. In any case, the bulk of the Belgian Labor party, abroad or in the invaded country, remained extremely reluctant when there was a question of resuming relations with German socialists at the proposed International Conference of Stockholm in 1916. And that, in spite of the fact that such a conference was advocated by their countryman and comrade Camille Huysmans, who was the Secretary of the Labor and Socialist International. Stockholm, as you know, was a failure.

I remember, too, that historical sitting of the Belgian Parliament, on August 4, 1914, when King Albert read his noble and simple message to the nation and the army from the speaker's chair and the announcement was made that Belgian territory had been invaded, some hours before, by German troops. During that sitting, the Catholic Prime Minister, M. de Broqueville, left his bench, crossed the Hall to join at his bench the socialist leader, M. Vandervelde, and said to him, in a low tone: "We have appointed you as a Minister of State. In such a moment as this, you

cannot refuse." When, some minutes later, he made the public announcement of the honor and responsibility conferred on the leader of the last Belgian general strike, the old conservative leader, M. Charles Woeste, rose and urged M. Vandervelde to accept. The extreme left burst into applause.

In the days of the Yser Battle, the socialist leader met King Albert at Headquarters. The King said to him: "Our soldiers are fighting desperately but they need to be comforted by some good words. Would you not consent to speak to them?" And so it was that the socialist leader Vandervelde, during a whole week, at the rear of the battle line, had perhaps the most stirring speaker's impressions of his whole life. I had the opportunity of going with him three months later, on another tour, when we spoke to soldiers of the old classes, men unshaved, in wooden shoes and torn uniforms and rather downhearted. What a memory!

In 1916, M. Vandervelde and the liberal leader M. Hymans became effective members in the coalition cabinet which was formed by M. de Broqueville at Le Havre, where the Belgian Government had settled, having been granted by France the privilege of "extraterritoriality." The homogeneous Catholic cabinets of the previous 32 years were at an end.

Prominent socialist leaders, some of whom had been sentenced before the War for anti-militarist propaganda, had enlisted in the Belgian army on August 4, 1914. Such had been the case for instance with M. Louis de Brouckère, who was, two years ago, chairman of the Disarmament Conference in Geneva. Those among the Belgian socialists who remained in their invaded country played a part of the first

rank in the resistance to invaders and some of them, like M. Joseph Wauters, an expert in questions of supply and agriculture, coöperated in the most useful way with Mr. Herbert Hoover and the Commission of Relief in Belgium.

Sad episodes of the occupation have to be quoted to explain the hatred which prevailed after the War, even in the ranks of the Labor party. Some of the district leaders were imprisoned, sentenced to death, and some were shot by the Germans. Certain "Houses of the People" (*Maisons du Peuple*) were burned in Louvain, Dinant, Tamines, and other places. But the saddest episode of the War in Belgium was surely the deportation to Germany or to the war zone, of thousands of Belgian workers who had refused to help the invaders in working for them and their military purposes. Among those victims of German militarism were some of our present socialist deputies, for instance, M. Delattre, who is now the secretary of the International Federation of Miners. The labor leaders who were in Belgium warned the German Governor-General Von Bissing, in a daring and noble message, of the terrible moral consequences which those deportations would have in the future. It is a fact that they aroused very bitter feelings among working people in Belgium and rendered especially difficult our task when, after the War, we preached a necessary reconciliation, international friendship, and took position against such retaliatory measures as the absurd occupation of the Ruhr.

One hundred and twenty thousand two hundred sixty-five Belgian workingmen were deported. Two thousand six hundred fifty-four died in exile. Others were wounded by pieces of shells, fired by the Allies in the zone where those poor people had been com-

pelled to dig trenches for the Germans. I know that some of the German socialist leaders did their best to stop those deportations. Herr Loebe, the present speaker of the Reichstag, has sent to me reports proving that during the War he and his friends had protested, in the Reichstag "*Ausschuss*" against those deportations. But in that time, of course, all the power was in the hands of Ludendorf and the General Staff. The Reichstag had nothing to say.

At the armistice, the labor leaders who were in Brussels handled very cleverly and skilfully the brief and strange revolution started by German soldiers and marines after the defeat of Ludendorf. Troops marched through Brussels with the red flag. Officers were humiliated in the streets. A German "Soviet" of soldiers and marines held a sitting in the room of the Senate where Miss Cavell had been sentenced to death. They sent to the *Maison du Peuple* for Mr. Wauters and other Belgian socialist leaders, who remained very quiet and enigmatical. The Belgian socialists had realized immediately that an extension of those disturbances to the countries of the victors would have meant nothing but chaos and anarchy.

King Albert was at Lophem Castle near Bruges. He received there some of the Belgian political leaders of the liberated country. A good story is told about the old Flemish labor leader, Anseele, who said to the King-soldier, shaking hands with him: "*Ça va bien! Nous sommes contents de vous!*" With a real grasp of the situation and the true sense of a public interest, King Albert, who had moreover the support of such moderate men as M. P. E. Janson or the great business man M. Francqui, realized that it was necessary to maintain the truce between the parties and to give substantial reforms to the working class, which

had behaved splendidly during four years. The first coalition cabinet of M. Delacroix "for national restoration" was formed. Socialists had three seats in it. What some blind and petty-minded Conservatives have described as the "*coup de Lophem*" was really necessary for the restoration of ruined Belgium in an undisturbed social peace.

Of course, the Labor party gained great results and victories. Belgium is no longer a country of long hours and low wages, a "paradise for capitalists," as Karl Marx said. And it has become a real democracy. Figures of the Labor party's progress, both from the political and industrial points of view, are demonstrative. The highest number of affiliated members since the War was in 1924: 639,000. They were 120,000 in 1913 and they are now 600,000. In the same year, the *Commission Syndicale* (Trade Union Board of the party) which controls some neutral unions boasted, in 1920, 720,000 members affiliated, to which 100,000 Christian Democratic workers may be added. It means something in a country of less than 8,000,000 inhabitants. Members of mutual insurance societies increased from 150,000 in 1914 to 400,000 in 1924. Socialist ministers were three in the two coalition cabinets of M. Delacroix, from the armistice to the general election of 1919, and four in the cabinet of M. Carton de Wiart from 1919 to 1921, a more democratic touch being given to the Government, the *union démocratique* being substituted for the *union sacrée*.

In the harvest of social reforms and post-war measures reaped by the Belgian Labor party may be quoted: an alteration of the anti-picketing law; the eight-hour day; a subsidy to unemployed (even

under certain conditions in case of strike or lock-out, for instance, when the employers refuse arbitration); a semi-prohibition law, restricting the sale of spirits; increase of the old-age pensions; the progressive income tax (which did not exist before the War in Belgium), with an exemption at the bottom for the living wage; a heavy tax on war profits; the establishment of equal suffrage for men and a democratic reorganization of the Senate; the foundation of a national society for the building of workers' houses, a reduction of the military service from fifteen to ten months. But perhaps the most important thing, from an industrial point of view, has been the appointment in the main trades of joint committees for the fixation of wages and conditions of work and for the settlement of eventual disputes. That coöperation between employer and trade-union leaders has avoided on many occasions threatening social conflicts.

Is it necessary to explain why Belgium is bound since 1919 to the system of coalition cabinets? That is due to the political map in the Parliament where no party has the majority and to the fact that proportional representation makes great political "land-slides" nearly impossible in that country.

A proof of the strong position that the Labor party had in the first post-war coalition cabinets is given by an incident which occurred on the eve of the war between Poland and Soviet Russia. The Polish army marched on Kiev to support the action of Petlura in the Ukraine. France tried to send munitions to Warsaw through Antwerp and Dantzig. Socialists in the Belgian Cabinet and in the dockers' trade-union succeeded in preventing that transit through Belgium. M. Hymans, a Liberal, who was then foreign

minister, resigned to protest against the socialist boycott.

But in 1921, another incident was fatal to the socialists. One of them, M. Anseele, who was then Minister of Public Works, attended in La Louvière a demonstration where an association of demobilized socialist soldiers were presented with a flag bearing as an emblem a soldier breaking his gun. The Catholic and Liberal members of the Cabinet made strong representations to M. Anseele. The four socialist ministers resigned. They said that M. Anseele need not apologize and that the soldier breaking his gun was a symbol of their love for peace and general disarmament. A fierce electoral campaign was made against them, the Liberals taking the lead in that frenzy of nationalism. The socialists were represented, in spite of their attitude during the Great War and after, as mere anti-militarists, crank pacifists, and would-be Bolsheviks. Their platform included: six-months military service, compulsory vocational education, social insurance (against disease, unemployment, etc.), the regulation of household industries, government monopoly of life and fire insurance, control of the state railroads by workmen and officials engaged in operating them (the management of the state railroads has been handed since then to a national company), nationalization of mines, extension of labor laws to agricultural workers, a share for the worker in the management of industry, and a tax on capital. They lost two seats out of seventy at the general election. But the sole beneficiary of the anti-socialist current was the conservative wing of the Catholic party. Every time the Liberals indulge in anti-socialist action, it results in

no benefit to them. It benefits always the most reactionary elements in Belgium.

Moreover, the number of labor men in the Upper House, or Senate, had risen from thirteen in 1914 to fifty-two. And at the municipal elections of the same year, 1921, the Labor party secured a majority in 246 cities which were towns or industrial centers of importance, and where the burgomaster was chosen from among the socialists, while through the provincial elections, a little later on, the party got control in the two greatest provinces of Belgium, Hainaut and Liège, and partial control in four other ones: Brabant, East Flanders, Antwerp, and Namur. Notwithstanding the resignation of the socialist ministers after the "broken gun" affair and the slight rebuff of the party at the general election, M. Theunis, who had been asked by King Albert to form the new cabinet, asked the socialists to accept seats in it. They refused. The question of ministerial coöperation, in the *bourgeois* state, which had been settled before the War, at the International Socialist Conference of Amsterdam in the negative sense, is, for the Belgian Labor party, no longer a question of principle but of opportunism, of circumstances, and this time they considered it was better for them to go back to opposition.

From 1921 to 1925, the Belgian Labor party led a very skilful opposition to the three Theunis cabinets, composed of Catholics and Liberals, who had a hard time, owing to the growth within the Catholic party of democratic tendencies, to the quarrel of languages around the University of Ghent, and to the extreme difficulty they met with when they tried to elaborate a trade agreement with France.

In spite of our great friendship for France, of the community of language and of war memories, our trade relations with that country have always been very difficult to settle. France is rather for high tariffs, while we are rather faithful to free trade. Our trade policy is based on the principle of "the most favored nation." We had passed commercial treaties with some fifteen nations on that basis and it was nearly impossible to give a privilege to France.

The socialists denounced the occupation of the Ruhr as an absurd adventure and were the first to advocate the adoption of the Dawes scheme. They gained ten seats at the general election of 1925, which is enormous in a House of 186, with the system of proportional representation. The socialists were thus seventy-eight, the Catholic party getting the same number of deputies, and the Liberals losing ground once more. But another feature of the election was a reinforcement within the Catholic party of the Democratic wing.

After a ministerial crisis of thirteen weeks, nearly the longest ever witnessed in Europe, the so-called democratic cabinet of M. Pouillet and M. Vandervelde was formed. Socialists had five seats out of eleven. M. Vandervelde became Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet Council and Foreign Minister, to be one of the signatories of the Locarno Pact. The Belgian Catholic bishops sent to all churches a message stating that the new government, where socialists besides Catholics were in charge, deserved a prudent confidence.

The new Cabinet was faced immediately, like the Herriot and Painlevé cabinets in France, with a very serious financial situation, a disturbing increase of the floating debt, and a steady devaluation of the cur-

rency. The Cabinet realized immediately that its first duty was to achieve the stabilization of the franc and postpone the voting of fresh social reforms. A first attempt was made to stabilize the franc at the rate of 107 francs to the pound sterling. In fact, it remained so during some months, thanks to the diligent control of the Finance Minister and of the National Bank. Bills on legal stabilization, the reorganization of the Bank, new taxes, and the payment of the war debt to the United States were introduced in the Parliament.

May I say a few words, very discreetly, on that question of the war debt? When the Treaty of Versailles was handed to Belgium, my Government received at the same time a letter signed by President Wilson, Clemenceau, and Lloyd George remitting the war debt of Belgium. Belgium had been victimized by war, invaded in spite of the treaties. Belgium had not the slightest part in the responsibilities. It was thus decided that Belgium would not repay her war debt to the United States, France, and Great Britain. But in spite of the letter signed by President Wilson, which was not endorsed by your Congress, Belgium has to pay you her war debt, like the post-war debt, which she never questioned. There was probably nothing else to do and I know that your Government has been fair in the conditions of the settlement. But, I confess frankly that when a bill was introduced for the ratification of an agreement with your Government on that question of the war debt, I abstained from voting.

The only weak point of the elaborate stabilization system drafted by the Finance Minister, M. Janssen, was that he had lost sight of the importance of the

floating debt. The whole scheme collapsed under violent attacks made in the press, on the Stock Exchange, and in the conservative sphere of the Parliament. In fact, the attacks were not directed chiefly against the stabilization scheme itself. They were rather against the fact that it was presented by a cabinet in which socialists had a strong hand. Savings fled to Holland or Switzerland. Foreign bankers in London and New York, impressed by press comments and the lack of confidence of wealthy Belgians in their Government, proposed suddenly other terms for the loan which was in view; the Belgian population was panic stricken. The Belgian franc collapsed, after the French. There was that "Black Monday" of 1926 when the franc passed from 107 francs to 135 to the pound, after having remained unchanged during six months. The Finance Minister, M. Janssen, two of his Catholic colleagues, one after the other and, at last, the Prime Minister, M. Poulet, resigned.

The Belgian franc rolled on a slide. The ghost of inflation threatened Belgium like France, after Germany and Austria. The country was confronted with a danger of a new sort, as great as the danger of invasion in 1914. That is the reason for which the Belgian socialists, notwithstanding the bitterness of their resentment, agreed to enter a national cabinet, a "*Cabinet de Salut Public*" formed by M. Jaspar, who had always been and is yet one of their fiercest opponents.

Curiously enough, the leaders of the trade-unions and of coöperative societies were among the most eager to advocate that temporary coöperation with the arch-enemy of the day before, while the intellectuals were rather reluctant. They said in brief:

The Belgian franc is more the franc of the poor than the franc of the rich. It is the franc of our trade-unions, wholesale and mutual insurance societies. Wealthy people have their savings abroad in Holland or Switzerland and they have changed them long ago into foreign currencies. The common house is now burning. We are ready to make a human chain with anybody. We will resume the political dispute afterwards.

The Labor faction in the Parliament subscribed to all the drastic steps and heavy taxes proposed by the Treasury Minister, M. Francqui. Of course, the communists denounced the socialists once more as traitors. But it happened at the same time that the Belgian Communist party split in two, like other ones in the world. One of the two communist deputies at the Chamber is a Trotskyist and he was expelled from the party on the order of Moscow, while the other one is a Stalinist. So that we have got two communist parties represented in our Parliament, with two members only.

The second Belgian stabilization was a success. The franc has been stabilized at the rate of 175 to the pound. It makes a serious difference with France, where the franc is 124. But economic conditions are very different between the two countries. The number of fund-holders, the amount of savings, the influence of the middle class are greater in France. And France, too, is rather an agricultural country with an important internal market; while Belgium's life depends upon exportation, as I have already explained. The rate of the new Belgian franc has been fixed in the interest of those who work. That means employers, farmers, and traders, as well as industrial workers. Of course, those who have suffered

most through the stabilization, as in Germany, are the *petits bourgeois*, the little fund-holders, the pensioned state officials, the middle class.

The economic consequences of stabilization have not been bad. Belgian industry is working hard. It is passing now through an interesting process of rationalization. Great public works are in progress which will make Antwerp, next to London and New York, the largest harbor in the world. An interesting scheme of hydroelectrification is now being discussed with great interest by public opinion and the press. The total number of unemployed has long been between twenty and thirty thousand, which is very few indeed. It used to be two hundred and fifty thousand immediately after the armistice. The cost of living, compared with that of other countries, remains as low as it was before the War. The increase of index-numbers, which was, of course, foreseen as a consequence of stabilization, has been slower than apprehended.

The Belgian Labor party has succeeded, during the hard times Belgium has passed through, in securing fresh concessions for the working class. One of the first acts of the first Jaspar Cabinet was, for instance, to propose a ratification without conditions or reservations of the Washington Agreement on the eight-hour day.

Now that the Belgian currency is placed on a solid basis, the political fight has been resumed after the truce. Socialists left the Jaspar Cabinet in October, 1927, because the War Minister, M. de Broqueville, declared that he was not in position to observe the pledge given by him on July 6 in the Senate, when he announced that he would introduce a new military

bill at the reopening of the Parliament in November. It is known that M. de Broqueville, at that time, was in favor of a substantial reduction of the military service term, even to six months, providing certain conditions should be fulfilled. But his personal opinion was checked by the veto of the general staff. The second Jaspar Cabinet proposed a bill reducing the service term from ten to eight months, but with many derogations from that principle. For instance, one son per family will have his service fixed at twelve months, while all students and state officials will be thirteen or fourteen months with the colors. Great expense will be necessary for the enforcement of that measure. It is a compromise between the pre-war system and the tendencies of the Christian Democrats, a section of the majority in the Parliament. A lively debate that started on July 18 was raised to the peak of political sensation when the speaker of the House, M. Emile Brunet, resigned last August. M. Brunet is a socialist, and yet he has been reelected at the opening of every session, even while his party was in the opposition, which is now the case.

The socialists advocate a reform of the army after the Jaurès and Swiss systems, on the base of six months' service, with an extension of physical training in civil life, in and after school. They consider their system as being able to insure the defense of the country, if ever again attacked, and at the same time as giving a proof of Belgium's will to disarm, after the disarmament of Germany, the Locarno Pact, and the Kellogg Treaty.

While involved in the hot political fights I have described, the Belgian Labor party has been faced

since the armistice with the necessity of changing some of its principles and traditional claims. *Are we going to change our program?* That is the title of a book published in 1923 by the leader, M. Vandervelde. Because we are socialists, we are in favor of a socialization of the great sources of wealth. As I have said, the final goal which we hope to attain gradually, through a normal and peaceful evolution, within the frame of democracy, is socialized property. But I also pointed to the fact that we are against the running of all trade or public utilities by the state, for it means for many people the red tape of bureaucracy. And yet, we have to recognize frankly that state control was necessary in war-time, and with the exception of some mistakes, did rather well. I do not forget that the running of the railroads by the state in Belgium, from 1837 to 1926, is to a great extent responsible for the great industrial prosperity of that country.

Even before the War, M. Vandervelde wrote another book with the suggestive title, *Socialism vs. State*. His ideal and ours, an ideal we worked out in some practical schemes, is a different one. Take for instance the coal mines. Coal is of the same vital importance for Belgium as for England. The Belgian legislation on mines and minerals dates from 1810, when a decree of Napoleon was redrafted. It provides that the sub-soil belongs to the state, which has the exclusive right of giving mining concessions. Now, when new coal veins were discovered some forty years ago in the north of Belgium (the so-called Campine) and in the south of Hainaut, close to the French border, it was decided that an important part of the new districts would be reserved for the state,

the remaining part being conceded as usual to companies who have to pay royalties. The Labor party propose that the reserve should be worked, for the benefit of the state, by a national board in which the Department of Labor and Commerce, the engineers and working people, and finally, the coal consumers, meaning chiefly industry, should be granted an adequate representation. We advocate a similar system for sources of hydroelectric power which up to now have not been developed in Belgium. Our railways, which were formerly under the control of the state and are yet the state property, are now run by a so-called National Joint Stock Company, in which the majority of shares belong to the state, fresh capital being brought by investors who receive a dividend guaranteed by law, *plus* a part of the eventual gains. A system of that kind exists in the Belgian Congo, at the gold mines of Kilo-Moto, which are also the property of the colony. You see that when Soviet Russia, faithful to the new economic policy of Lenin, makes her so-called "Trusts," with a copartnership of the state and of foreign capital, that Holy Land of the integral Social Revolution does not go farther away than little Belgium, that very fatherland of the arch-social-traitors and valets of capitalism, of whom I am probably a remarkable example.

VI

LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN BELGIUM

(Concluded)

As I have already explained, the P.O.B. is a complex of economic and political organizations. The coöperative societies are the cells around which that great party has been built. They have played a part of the first importance in the development of the Belgian labor movement. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that they have financed it. Of course, there are in Belgium, besides these socialist institutions, coöperatives which are Catholic, Liberal, or neutral, for instance, those of the state officials or of the railway-men; but none of them is on the same level as the big socialist coöperatives, *Vooruit* (Forward) in Ghent, *Maison du Peuple* in Brussels, *Progrès* in Jolimont, or the *Union Coöperative* of Liège.

The first "coöperative" was created in Brussels by a Walloon workingman, Nicolas Coulon, back from Paris, after the Revolution of 1848. But that "Fraternal Society of Workers" had a very short life, like the shops opened by a Belgian section of the First International, called Solidarity. But the real socialist touch was given to the coöperative movement in Ghent when Anseele and van Beveren transformed, in 1881, a small coöperative society which had existed since 1876 under the name of the *Free Bakers* and rebaptized it *Vooruit*, which means, in Flemish, Forward!

It is a long way from the poor inn "Zacheus,"

where the first loaves were baked, to the palaces and factories which are owned now by the coöperative society in the great Flemish city. The number of affiliated has passed from 272 in 1881 to more than 16,000 in 1925. The *Vooruit* is the biggest baker and coal trader of Ghent. It controls a great number of groceries and other shops, seven chemist shops, two restaurants, a brewery, several cinemas, and two magnificent buildings which provide offices for the various activities of the party, dance halls, meeting-rooms, libraries, a gymnasium, and many other services. Like all the other coöperatives in Belgium, *Vooruit* offers many advantages to its members, such as old-age pensions, assistance to the family in case of birth or death, illness or accident, assistance being proportioned to the amount of the family's purchase. Besides that, *Vooruit* and other coöperatives give financial assistance to the art and education groups of the party. Anseele used to say that the "*ménagère*," the workingman's wife, has got the revolution in her basket, meaning by that, that if the working class bought everything at the coöperative, it would give a serious blow to private trade and capitalism. Anseele points also to the fact that only 250,000,000 of francs of workingmen's savings are in the coöperatives, while 2,000,000,000 are placed in the National Savings Bank. But the great idea of Anseele is that the working class has to become a producer for itself. Already, in 1903, *Vooruit* had purchased a textile factory in Ghent and formed a new coöperative society to control it. But it appeared very soon that industrial production on a large scale was not possible through the coöperative system (law in Belgium has formulated restrictions to the activity of coöpera-

tives). Industrial production needs capital and technical help of the highest quality. Now *Vooruit* and its bank, *La Banque belge du Travail* (Belgian Labor Bank), have created joint-stock companies of the capitalistic type to control all sorts of enterprises which they have purchased since 1903: seven textile works, a printing house, a foundry, a stove factory, a building company, and chiefly the famous fishing enterprise of Ostend, *Les Armements Ostendais*, better known in Belgium as the Red Fleet. That fishing enterprise has now twelve trawlers which are the best fitted in Ostend. One of them is called the "Karl Marx," another one the "Vandervelde," another one the "Giacomo Matteoti," after the Italian socialist deputy who was murdered by the Fascists. The socialist trawlers have been fishing as far away as the coasts of Iceland and Morocco, or in the White Sea, while those belonging to private enterprises remained prudently in the North Sea.

Anseele is proud to say that "they" are now the greatest weavers of Belgium, that they have obtained a concession in the Belgian Congo for cotton growing, that the five thousand workers of the *Vooruit* factories are the best paid, that the old socialist cooperative keeps the majority of the shares in the companies which run those factories, that some of these shares have given "dividends" of 17 per cent, and that they are very well quoted on the Brussels Stock Exchange.

It is necessary to say that there is some opposition within the Labor party to that daring business spirit of the genial old leader, Anseele. Some people consider it as a dangerous deviation from a socialist point of view. But Anseele and his Ghent comrades

answer that it helps labor to control industry, to fix the standard of wages in one of the great Belgian trades, and that it prepares the working class, technically, for a future control of production. But what about a strike, if ever there is one at the *Vooruit* factories, bringing their workers and the socialist leaders into conflict?

If not so audacious as the *Vooruit*, there are in Belgium other socialist coöperative societies worth mention. The *Maison du Peuple* of Brussels dates from 1882. Its first loaves of bread were transported by one of those picturesque dog-carts which have not yet completely disappeared from Belgium. The *Maison du Peuple* has now a skyscraper (of course a skyscraper of ten floors, which is a skyscraper for little Belgium) and throughout Brussels and its suburbs, dozens of shops, *cafés*, chemist shops, etc. From thirty in 1882, the number of families affiliated has grown to twenty-one thousand.

The *Progrès* of Jolimont is the richest of all. Its first bakery was built in 1886 by miners and iron-workers during their leisure time. The *Union Coöperative* of Liège extends its activity to the provinces of Liège, Luxemburg, and Limburg. It is the "super-dreadnought" of the Belgian coöperative movement with its seventy thousand affiliated families, its three hundred shops, and its factories of all sorts.

If you add to those big institutions a very great number of local or district coöperatives, which will be probably more and more amalgamated, you will realize what power the coöperative movement has given to the working class and to socialist action in Belgium. Some coöperatives became producers with-

out creating, like the *Vooruit*, special joint-stock companies. They run, for instance, a quarry in Huy, printing houses in various towns, leather and wooden shoe factories, glassworks at Fraire, a stool factory in Ath, various textile works, a milk farm in Herffelingen, a garden for the production of seeds in Tihange and, last but not the least, a source of medicinal water, a sort of proletarian Vichy or Spa, at Le Roeulx. Let us not forget two banks, an insurance company, and societies for the building of workers' houses. Having realized that the coöperative movement gives important financial support to men during a strike and to socialism in Belgium ("It is the milk-cow of our party," the leaders used to say), Belgian employers have created during these last years shops which are close to their factories and mines, in order to compete with the socialist "coöperatives."

In 1892, the number of men affiliated with Belgian trade-unions did not exceed sixty to seventy thousand. I have already quoted the post-war figures: 700,000 in 1922, 720,000 in 1924, a little less than 600,000 today. We may add to those numbers of trade-unionists affiliated with the Labor party, the Christian Democratic workers who boast of being more or less 180,000, Liberal trade-unions with very small numbers in Antwerp, and some big neutral organizations, such as the diamond-workers, the typographers, railwaymen, and textile workers in Verviers, but with the exception of the last one, those neutral organizations are collaborating with the Labor party.

The Labor unions not only fight for wages and discuss with the employers hours and conditions of work, but they supervise the enforcement of social

legislation and care for their members in case of illness, idleness, etc. They are studying very carefully problems of present interest such as rationalization, vocational education, leisure time of the workingman, free trade, etc.

Mutual insurance societies which were always very popular in Belgium in all parties, have been created within the Labor party for men and women. They boast a splendid development since the War. They have organized several up-to-date clinics, and homes for workers' holidays on the seacoast or in the Ardennes, and built, with the support of world-famous physicians like the late Dr. Depage, splendid hospitals. They have really prepared a solid structure for the next legislation on social insurance which will be enacted before long in Belgium as in Bismarck's Germany or in Austria.

The P.O.B. controls seven daily papers (four French and three Flemish) and a publishing house. But those papers are not in a state of competing with the *bourgeois* press.

The effort of the party in the sphere of general education for young people and adults has been remarkable. Many lectures in French or Flemish are organized throughout the country on general and socialist topics. There are some district socialist schools. At the top of the educational system is the Workers' High School of Uccle, near Brussels, similar to Ruskin College in Oxford or to the Brookwood College in New York.

In my chapter on the worker's leisure time, I pointed to the fact that the spirit of association which prevails in Belgium is responsible for the great number of remarkable amateur bands, choral and dra-

matic societies founded in that country. The Labor party can be proud of many of them. The party has an art section. I have the honor of being in charge of it. We have organized some important exhibitions, for instance, in Ghent, when we presented more than three hundred sculptures, paintings, and drawings made by Constantin Meunier, the great Belgian artist who has taken his models among coal miners, glass blowers, steel workers, and harbor dock workers. More recently, we organized in Brussels an exhibition of the "Wonders of Work" showing, besides Constantin Meunier, Belgian and foreign artists such as your great lithographer and etcher, Joseph Pennell, who have discovered the beauty of industry and of human power. Sections of the Belgian Labor party have taken a greater part, for some years, in the world movement of Youth, in which I know there is a great deal of interest in some sections of your public opinion.

You already realize that the Belgian labor leaders are not ashamed of being called "reformists," or, if you prefer, pink, moderate, traitors, by their enemies of every day, the communists. We are no *doctrinaires* sticking to stiffened dogmas. Since the armistice, as I explained to you, we have been wise in revising some parts of our program, some of our traditional claims which had passed through the test of war and post-war experiences. I have explained already our position toward religion, the control of production and public utilities by the state, the farming problem, the army, and foreign policy. May I take two other examples?

What is our attitude toward the chief of the state? Socialists in Belgium, as everywhere, are republican

because they think that a republic, from an idealistic point of view, is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. One of the first articles of our platform before the War and now, is that we are in favor of a republic in Belgium. And yet there has been no campaign within the party, since the War, against the monarchy. Such a campaign would be unpopular. King Albert deserves really the great admiration and sympathy he enjoys among his countrymen and, I think, abroad. First of all, he is very simple and dignified, devoted to his people, studying by himself all the problems connected with the economic, cultural, and technical progress of his country. He is better than a king: he is a man. But as a king, he respects the Constitution. He is a part of the executive power, but he cannot go against the will of Parliament. In some circumstances, he may play the part of an adviser, but he has less to say than the President of the United States.

When a young man, King Albert not only spent a great part of his time in factories, visiting mines and workshops, traveling on the engines of trains, but he studied social and political science with the late Dr. Waxweiler, who was the director of the Brussels Institute of Sociology. Some people say that his predecessor, King Leopold II, who was a genial man but who hurt the feelings of his people by his private life and his Congo policy, said sometimes of the Crown Prince Albert, "I have got a nephew who is socialist." Nothing has been done since the armistice by the Labor party against the monarchy, and when last year it was proposed to increase the *Liste Civile*, the budget of the Crown, which covers a great number of state expenses, for instance, the reception of the

heads of foreign states, many of the socialist members of Parliament were in favor, or at least abstained from voting. They said that, owing to the fall of the Belgian currency, it was fair to take into account the real value of the franc for the Crown expenses as for other parts of the general budget. The attitude of Belgian labor on that point does not mean that it would not oppose the King very strongly if he went beyond his constitutional rights. According to the fundamental law, he is the chief of the army. When in that capacity, he expressed his views, very discreetly, on the problem of military reorganization, it was rather badly resented in some sections of our public opinion, in spite of the great sympathy he earned during the War and after.

King Albert takes a great deal of interest in the development of the Belgian Congo. He has been there several times and lately he made a very extensive tour with the Queen across the colony where he inaugurated a new railway joining the Atlantic to the Katanga district.

I think it is worth explaining the position of the Belgian Labor party on the colonial problem. You are probably aware that, in the time of the Congo Free State, when Leopold II was at the same time, through a régime of purely personal union, King of the Belgians and sovereign of the great African empire, the Labor party was not the less eager to denounce some abuses which had a very bad reflection on the work done in central Africa by some gallant Belgian pioneers who went there, after your Stanley, to fight against the Arabic slave-traders and to open a continent full of mystery to modern civilization.

Not only did we protest in the Parliament and in

the country against the horrors of the Red Rubber (horrors which have been moreover somewhat exaggerated abroad) but we opposed annexation of the Congo when it was offered to Belgium by Leopold II. But, in spite of that opposition, the Congo became a Belgian colony in 1905 and, in 1919, we were granted by the Peace Conference a mandate in the adjoining territory of Ruanda-Urundi which was before the War a German possession. What was the position of Belgian socialism and of the International going to be after the War, on that colonial issue? It is true that once, a long time ago, an international labor and socialist conference, meeting at Copenhagen, passed a resolution against colonialism. It was just purely negative, a sort of ritual condemnation, which is no longer sufficient for a party which has grown in importance, has been in charge, and likes to take responsibilities. Twenty years have passed since the Copenhagen resolution and still there is a hard fact: colonies exist. Belgium has got one. Nobody, I suppose, except childish Bolsheviks, advocates the thesis of an immediate and total evacuation of the colonies. It would mean the danger of another world war. It would mean also in some of the colonies a real setback for the condition of the natives. Notwithstanding blunders and mistakes, notwithstanding cruelties which too often featured the first steps of colonization, in some parts of the world, it is a fact that white people have given to natives hospitals and roads, schools and railways, and that they succeeded sometimes in relieving them from old feudal burdens or from a barbarous domination. May I add, that there are problems of raw materials and migrations which are of capital interest for the whole world, specially

for some congested and industrialized countries of old Europe? Those problems can only be solved through a proper working of the natural resources of the tropical and equatorial countries of the world. It is not without interest for the textile worker of Manchester or Ghent that the mills should have enough cotton to work. And so with the consumer.

But of course these material considerations are not the only ones we have to keep in mind when discussing the colonial problem. The very aim of colonization ought to be the welfare of natives, the raising of backward or degenerate populations to the level of modern civilization. In that way, I dare to say that the Belgian Labor party did a great deal in the Congo to prevent a disguised return to the bad practice of forced labor and to provide the natives with good housing, food, and transport conditions. Our policy, during the last months, has been that the industrial development of the Congo has been too fast and that agriculture did not improve at the same speed. I mean agriculture which can give to the natives all the food they need. The necessity of bringing a great quantity of colored labor to the mines had sometimes the consequence of disorganizing the native communities' tribal life, and of spreading the sleeping sickness by the shifting of populations across the Black Continent.

You see thus that we do not stick to the Marxian dogma of a so-called fatal "proletarianization" through the process of industrial capitalism.

Belgian socialists did not only discuss the economic teaching of Karl Marx. They have contributed also to a revision of the ethics of socialism. Of course, when Karl Marx wrote *Das Kapital*, he corrected the

purely idealistic character of socialism as it had been formulated by utopism, by generous dreamers such as Fourier or Saint-Simon. Marx drafted the philosophy of "Historical materialism." His point was that the whole process of civilization, ideas, law, politics, is influenced by economy, by the modes of production. Such a system, if taken in too radical a sense, leaves a very small place to moral conceptions in the socialist movement which, after all, is a great aspiration toward social justice and the fulfilment of some Christian teachings.

So it was that a young Belgian scholar, called Henri de Man, who studied in Leipzig, and who used to be a fanatical Marxist before the War, wrote in German, some years ago, a very curious and remarkable book called "Beyond Marxism" in which he restores the moral elements of socialism and puts them in their right place. I think with him that socialism is not a question of stomach but a question of brains and high morality. The excess of businesslike spirit, a certain lack of love for ideology and doctrinal disputes which prevailed in the Belgian labor movement have been corrected in a happy way by the publication of de Man's book and the discussions which centered around it.

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I have tried to give an idea of the great force of the Belgian Labor party. Of course, we have points of weakness. We are divided, but less than the other parties in Belgium, by the question of language, the quarrel between French and Flemish. We are divided also, in a rather curious way, by the question of the vote for women.

Up to the present day, women vote only in Belgium at municipal elections. A vote is granted also for national elections, to widows and mothers of soldiers who died in the World War. The reason that some labor men are opposed to an extension of woman's suffrage is that the reform has been strongly advocated, since 1919, since the enforcement of equal suffrage for men, by the Catholic party, whose doctrine should prevent calling women to the forum. Some socialists, rightly or wrongly, say that the Catholic priests have in Belgium such an influence on women and so often interfere with politics, that the real aim of the Catholic party in advocating the vote for women is to neutralize the effect of equal suffrage which men have secured after such a long fight. "*Périssent les colonies plutôt qu'un principe!*" said a leader of the French Revolution. Well, some Belgian socialists who are against an extension of the woman's vote say the contrary. They prefer solid realities, the maintenance of the great political and social improvements they have achieved since the armistice, to the enforcement of a principle which would result perhaps in a dangerous setback and render power to the Catholics for many years.

But of course, when women's social education shall have made more progress, I think that their movement for acquisition of the vote will become irresistible in Belgium as everywhere.

According to M. Emile Vandervelde, Belgium is now marching toward the sovereignty of labor. The next general election which will take place, at the latest, in the spring, will show us to what extent our leader was right.

INDEX

- Aerschot, 2
 Agriculture, 68-69, 78
 Albert, King, 51, 72, 73, 75, 79, 95-96
 Alcoholism, 48-52 (*see also* Prohibition, semi-); in France, 34
 Andenne, 2
 Andler, Charles, 35
 Anseele, Edouard, 58, 61, 75, 78, 88, 89, 90
 Antwerp (city), 2, 13, 26, 63, 84, 92
 Antwerp (province), 5, 79
 Arlon, 4
 Army, 65, 96; languages in, 7, 11; and physical training, 30
 See also Military service
 Art, 14-16, 17, 35, 38, 39, 40, 55, 89, 94; of the people, 36-37, 93-94
 Arts and Crafts, High Institute of, 27
 Ath, 92
 Austria, 71, 82, 93; socialism in, 40, 62
 Autonomy, provincial, 11

 Bakunin, Mikhail, 57
 Banks, 69, 81, 89, 90, 92
Banque belge du Travail, La, 90
 Belgium, Constitution of, 6, 8, 60; population of, 4, 5
 Berlioz, Hector, 36
 Bertrand, Louis, 48, 58; quoted, 48
 Bismarck, O. E. L. von, 93
 Bissing, M. F. von, 74
 Bissolati, Leonida, 44
 Black Country, 60
 Blanquist organization, 44

 Bohemia, 30
 Bolshevism, 67
 See also Communism
 Bordet, Jules, 49
 Borinage, the, 13
 Bourneville, 31
 Brabant, 5, 8, 79; and workers' leisure, 25, 38
 Breitscheid, Rudolf, 71
 Briand, Aristide, 44
 British Labor party, 40
 Brookwood College, 93
 Broqueville, Charles, Comte de, 63, 72, 73, 84-85
 Brouckère, Louis de, 47, 73
 Brunet, Emile, 47, 85
 Brussels, 5, 8, 13, 45, 46, 49, 60, 62, 88, 91, 94; German soldiers in, 75; technical education in, 26, 27

 Cadbury, George, 31
 Cammaerts, Emile, quoted, 12
 Campine, the, 13, 86
 Capital, 87, 90; tax on, 78
 See also Savings
 Capitalism, 70, 89, 90
 Carton de Wiart, Henry, Count, 76
 Catholic Church, Roman, 64; adherents of, 14, 64; clergy of, 7, 52, 64, 100
 See also Catholic party; Christian Democracy; Church and State
 Catholic party, 46, 61, 62, 63-65, 72, 73, 78-79, 80, 100
 Charleroi, 2, 6, 27, 60
 Charriaux, Henri, quoted, 65
 Children, work by, 63, 65
 Christian Democracy, 63-65, 79, 80, 85, 92

- Church and State, 53, 65
 Clemenceau, Georges E., 81
 Coal, 86
 Cockerill Works, 34
 Colins, J. G. C. A. H., Baron de, 57
 Colonialism, 97-98
 Communism, 43, 45-46, 67, 83, 94; French, 46
 Compensation, 63
 Comte, Auguste, 58
 Congo, Belgian, 69, 87, 90, 95, 96-98
 Considerant, Victor, 56
 Coolidge, Calvin, 29
Coopération des Idées, La, 31
 Coöperative associations, 28, 34, 40, 41, 42, 43, 55, 58, 82-83, 88-92; French, 41-42
 Copeau, Jacques, 36
 Coster, Charles de, quoted, 19
 Coulon, Nicolas, 88
 Courtrai, 13, 18
 Crane, Walter, 22
 Currency, stabilization of, 48, 50, 53, 80-81, 81-84
 Cuvelier, J., 3
 Czechoslovakia, 30, 36, 69

 Daladier, Edouard, 26
 Dawes plan, 80
 Debt, floating, 82; war, 81
 DeForest, Jessé, 13
 Defuisseaux, Alfred, 59-60
 Deherme, Gaston, 31
 Delacroix, Victor, 76
 Delattre, A., 74
 Denis, Hector, 58; quoted, 21
 Depage, Dr., 93
 Deportation, 74-75
 Dinant, 2, 74
 Disarmament, 53
 Doyen, Albert, 35
 Drama, 35-36, 37, 38, 39, 93-94
 Dutch language, 5
 Dutch literature, 6

 East Flanders, 5, 79
 Education, 29, 39, 40, 55, 65, 89, 93; compulsory, 25-26, 31, 65, 78; in Great Britain, 26, 31; technical, 26, 27, 78, 93
See also Schools
 Eight-hour day, 20, 21, 23, 24, 33, 51, 65, 84
 Electric power, 68, 84, 87
 Elizabeth, Queen, 34
 Emerson, R. W., 30
 Employers, 92; coöperation of, with unions, 77; philanthropic work by, 27, 31, 34, 66
 Engels, Friedrich, 56
 England, *see* Great Britain
 English language, 7
 Eupen, 4
 Export trade, 26-27, 83^a

 Fascists, 41, 45, 64
 Finland, 30
 Fisher Act, 26
 Flamingants, 8, 10, 11
 Flanders, 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12, 46
See also East Flanders; West Flanders
 Flemings, 5; characteristics of, 2-4, 11-19
 Flemish dialect, 1, 4-11
 Food production, 26
 Foreign affairs, 53, 65
 Fouillée, A. J. E., 20
 Fourier, Charles, 21, 56, 99
 Fourniere, Eugene, 66
 Fraire, 92
 France, Anatole, quoted, 39
 France, 9, 11, 46, 77, 80, 81, 82, 83; labor movements in, 41-42; socialism in, 41-42, 43, 44; trade relations with, 79-80; workers' leisure in, 30, 32
 Franconi, Emile, 75, 83

- "Fraternal Society of Workers," 88
 Free trade, 80, 93
 French language, 4, 5, 6, 7-8, 9, 10-11, 14
 Fugner, 30

 Gardens, workmen's, 22, 33-34, 38
 Gémier, 36
 Geneva, International Labor Conference of, 23, 25, 33
 German language, 4, 7
 Germany, 1, 4, 69, 71, 82, 84, 85, 93; Catholic party in, 64; socialists of, 71-72; and war in Belgium, 53, 54, 71-75
 Ghent, 13, 56-57, 63, 88, 89, 90, 94
 Ghent, University of, 1, 10-11, 79
 Godart, Justin, 33; quoted, 33-34
 Goethe, J. W. von, quoted, 22
 Graves, Frank P., 54
 Great Britain, 81; education in, 26, 31; Labor party of, 40; Liberal party of, 31, 32; physical training in, 30-31
 Greece, 36
 Greef, Guillaume de, 58
 Gregoire, Henri, 9
 Guesde, J. B., 44
 Guicciardini, Francesco, 3
 Guilds, 55, 61

 Haase, Hugo, 71-72
 Hainaut, 5, 6, 13, 57, 79, 86; and technical education, 26, 27; and workers' leisure, 25, 38-39
 Havre, Le, Belgian government at, 49, 73
 Herffelingen, 92
 Hervé, Gustave, 44
 Hodges, Frank, 31
 Holland, 7, 9, 11; flight of sav-
 ings to, 82, 83; literature of, 6
 Hoover, Herbert, 66, 74
 Horta, Victor, 40
 Houdeng-Goegnies, 62
 Housing, 22, 38, 65, 77, 92
 Hugo, Victor, 56
 Huy, 92
 Huysmans, Camille, 72
 Hymans, Paul, 73, 77

 Imports, 27
 Income tax, 77
 Individualism, 66-67
 Industry, 2, 13, 27, 63, 84, 87; co-operatives in, 89-92; household, regulation of, 78; worker's share in, 78
 See also Property, socialization of
 Insurance, social, 78, 93
 See also Insurance societies, mutual
 Insurance societies, mutual, 40, 41, 42, 55, 83, 89, 92, 93; membership in, 76
 International, the, 40, 45, 47, 55, 57, 71, 88, 97
 International Labor Conferences, at Geneva, 23, 25, 33; at Washington, 20, 84
 International Socialist Conferences, 57, 71, 72, 79, 97
 Italy, 43, 44-45, 64; workers' leisure in, 33

 Janson, Paul, 60
 Janson, P. E., 75
 Janssen, Albert, 81, 82
 Jaspas, Henri, 82, 84, 85
 Jaurès, Jean, 35, 44, 71, 85
 Jolimont, 88, 91
 Jouhaux, Léon, 23, 34

 Kellogg Treaty, 85
 Kerensky, Alexander, 45
 Kilo-Moto, gold mines of, 87

- Labor, General Confederation of, 34
 Labor laws, for agricultural workers, 78
See also Work
 Labor party, *see* *Parti ouvrier belge*
 Ladeuze, P., Mgr., 54
 Lafargue, Paul, quoted, 69
 Lafontaine, Henri, 47
 La Louvière, 6, 78
 Languages, 1, 4-11, 53, 79, 99; in army, 7, 11; class division in, 6, 7, 8, 9; in schools, 7-8, 10-11
 Leisure, workers', 20-25, 30-39, 51, 89, 93; bill concerning, 25, 27-28, 33, 34, 37; in France, 32, 33-35; in Great Britain, 30-31, 32; in Italy, 33; in Russia, 32-33; in United States, 29-30
 Lemire, Jules Augusto, 22
 Lenin, V. I., 45, 87
 Leo XIII, Pope, 64
 Leopold II, King, 95, 96, 97
 Leverhulme, W. H. Lever, Baron, 31
 Liberal party, 61, 63, 78, 79, 80, 92
 Libraries, 39, 89; British, 31, 32; public, 28-29
 Liège (city), 2, 4, 6, 18, 27, 46, 60, 88, 91
 Liège (province), 5, 6, 13, 25, 79, 91; and workers' leisure, 25, 38
 Limburg, 5, 13, 91
 Literature, 6-7, 17-18
 Living, cost of, 84
 Lloyd George, David, 32, 81
 Locarno Pact, 80, 85
 Loeb, Paul, 75
 Lophem, 75, 76
 Louis Napoleon, 56
 Louvain, 2, 62, 74
 Louvain University, library of, 53-54
 Ludendorff, Erich, 75
 Luxemburg, Rosa, 67, 71; quoted, 67
 Luxembourg (grand duchy), 4
 Luxembourg (province), 5, 91
Maison du Peuple (Brussels), 40, 75, 88, 91
 Malmédy, 4, 14
 Man, Henri de, 29, 99
 Marolles, the, 49
 Marx, Karl, 56, 57, 68-69, 98-99; quoted, 66, 76
 Marx, Wilhelm, 64
 Matteotti, Giacomo, 41
 Menin, 46
 Mercier, Désiré, Cardinal, 49, 53, 54
 Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, 38
 Meuse, R., 2
 Michelet, Jules, 36, 39
 Miglioli, Dom, 64
 Military service, 77, 78, 84-85
See also Army
 Mines, nationalization of, 68, 78, 86-87
 Monarchy, 95
 Mons, 13-14, 18, 37, 46, 60
 Moravia, 30
 Moresnet, 4
 Morris, William, 21-22
 Mouscron, 4, 46
 Müller, Herman, 72
 Music, 14, 15, 35, 37, 93
 Mussolini, Benito, 41, 44
 Namur (city), 18
 Namur (province), 5, 79
 Napoleon Bonaparte, 86
 National Bank, 81
 National Savings Bank, 89
 Nivelles, 18
 Nolf, Pierre, 10

- Ostend, 90
- Paape, César de, 47, 57-58
- Painlevé, Paul, 44
- Parliament, Labor representatives in, 44, 46, 47, 61, 78, 80, 83
- Parma, Domenico Paulozzi, 3
- Parti ouvrier belge*, 40-44, 45, 46-49, 53, 54, 58-63, 64-66, 68, 76-87, 88, 90, 92-100; in Cabinet, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82; in Chamber, 44, 46, 47, 61, 78, 80, 83; membership in, 41, 76; in Senate, 79; and World War, 71-75
See also Socialism
- Pastur, Paul, 38
- Pensions, old-age, 63, 77, 89
- Petlura, Simon, 77
- Physical training, 30, 39, 89
- Picard, Edmond, 59; quoted, 59
- Picketing, 76
- Pirenne, Henri, quoted, 4
- Poland, 69, 77
- Political leagues, 40, 41, 55, 64
- Port Sunlight, 31
- Pottecher, Maurice, 36
- Pouillet, Prosper, Vicomte, 80, 82
- Press, 82, 84; Labor, 54, 93
- Prevost, Captain, 37
- Progrès*, 88, 91
- Prohibition, semi-, 49-52, 77
- Property, socialization of, 67-69, 78, 86, 87
- Protestants, 13-14
- Proudhon, P. J., 56, 58
- Public opinion, 84, 96
- Public utilities, state control of, 69, 86
- Railroads, 68, 78, 86, 87, 92
- Recreation, importance of, 29
- Reed, Thomas Harrison, 43; quoted, 5, 9-10, 40, 42-43
- Reggio Emilia, Congress of, 44
- Religion, 13-14, 52-53, 65
See also Catholic Church, Roman
- Renan, Ernest, 1; quoted, 1-2, 39
- Revolution of 1830, 9
- Ribot, A. F. J., quoted, 22
- Rives, Paul, 23; quoted, 23, 24
- Rochdale pioneers, 58
- Rockefeller, John D., Jr., 29
- Roeulx, Le, 92
- Rossetti, Count Carlo, Cardinal, 3
- Ruanda-Urundi, 97
- Ruhr Valley, 53, 74, 80
- Rumania, 69
- Ruskin College, 31, 93
- Russia, 67, 69, 77; socialism in, 43, 44, 45, 87; workers' leisure in, 32-33
- Saint-Vith, 4
- Sambre, R., 2
- Sand, René, quoted, 29
- Sauerwein, J. A., 64
- Savings, 51, 89
See also Capital
- Scandinavian countries, 30
- Schools, languages in, 7-8, 10-11; public, 53; religious, 53, 65; socialist, 93; technical, 26, 27
See also Education
- Sembat, Marcel, 23
- Senate, Labor representation in, 79; reorganization of, 77
- Seraing, 34
- Serbia, 71
- Slovakia, 30
- Socialism, 35, 43-45, 62, 66-68, 98-99; in Belgium, 40, 41, 42-43, 45-46, 47-48, 55-58, 67, 69, 93, 94-95 (*see also* *Parti ouvrier belge*); financial support for, 88, 89, 92
- Socialist associations, 56-57
- Socialization of property, 67-69, 78, 86, 87

- Social legislation, 63, 65, 76-77, 92-93
Société Générale, La, 69
 Sokol movement, 30
 Solidarity, 88
 Stinnes, Hugo, 69
 Strikes, 56, 91; financing of, 92; political, 61-63, 73
 Sturzo, Luigi, 64
 Suffrage, 10, 59-63, 77, 100; for women, 99-100
 Sunday rest, 63
 Swedish Social-Democratic party, 40
 Switzerland, flight of savings to, 82, 83

 Taine, Hippolyte, quoted, 15
 Tamines, 74
 Taxation, 77, 81, 83
 Textile Association of Ghent, 56-57
 Textile industry, coöperatives in, 89-90, 92
 Theater, 35, 35-36, 37, 38, 39, 93-94
 Theunis, A., 79
 Tihange, 92
 Toynbee Hall, 31
 Trade disputes, 77
 Trade-unions, 20, 28, 34, 40, 41, 42, 55, 56, 64, 82-83, 92-93; coöperation of employers with, 77; and education, 26, 31; French, 41-42; membership in, 76, 92
Travail, Université du, 27
Trente ans de théâtre, 36
 Trusts, 69
 Turati, Filippo, 21
 Tyrs, 30

 Uccle, 93
 Unemployment, 84; aid during, 76-77, 93

Union Coöperative, 88, 91
 United States of America, 30; Belgian debt to, 81

 Van Beveren, 88
 Vandervelde, Emile, 32, 35, 42, 46, 49, 51, 63, 72-73, 80, 86, 100
 Van Gogh, Vincent, 13
 Verhaeren, Emile, 16-17, 18; quoted, 16, 17, 19, 31
 Verlaine, Paul, quoted, 15
 Versailles, treaty of, 4, 14
 Verviers, 4, 57, 63, 92
 Vienna, Congress of, 9
 Visé, 4
 Volders, Jean, quoted, 47
Vooruit, 88, 88-91, 92

 Wages, 65, 76, 77, 91, 92
 Wagner, Richard, 35
 Wallonia, 1, 2, 6, 7, 11, 12
 Walloon dialect, 4, 5, 6, 14, 18
 Walloons, 2-4, 5, 8, 11-19
 War of 1914-1918, Belgian socialists and, 71-75
 War profits, tax on, 77
 Washington, International Labor Conference at, 20, 84
 Wauters, Joseph, 74, 75
 Waxweiler, Emile, 95
 West Flanders, 5
 Wilson, Woodrow, 81
 Wirth, Karl Joseph, 64
 Woeste, Charles, 61, 73
 Women, vote for, 99-100; work by, 63, 65
 Work, conditions of, 63, 65, 77, 92; hours of, 63, 65, 76 (*see also Eight-hour day*)
 Workers' High School, 93
 Workers' leisure, *see* Leisure, workers'

 Y. M. C. A., British, 30
 Ypres, 4

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